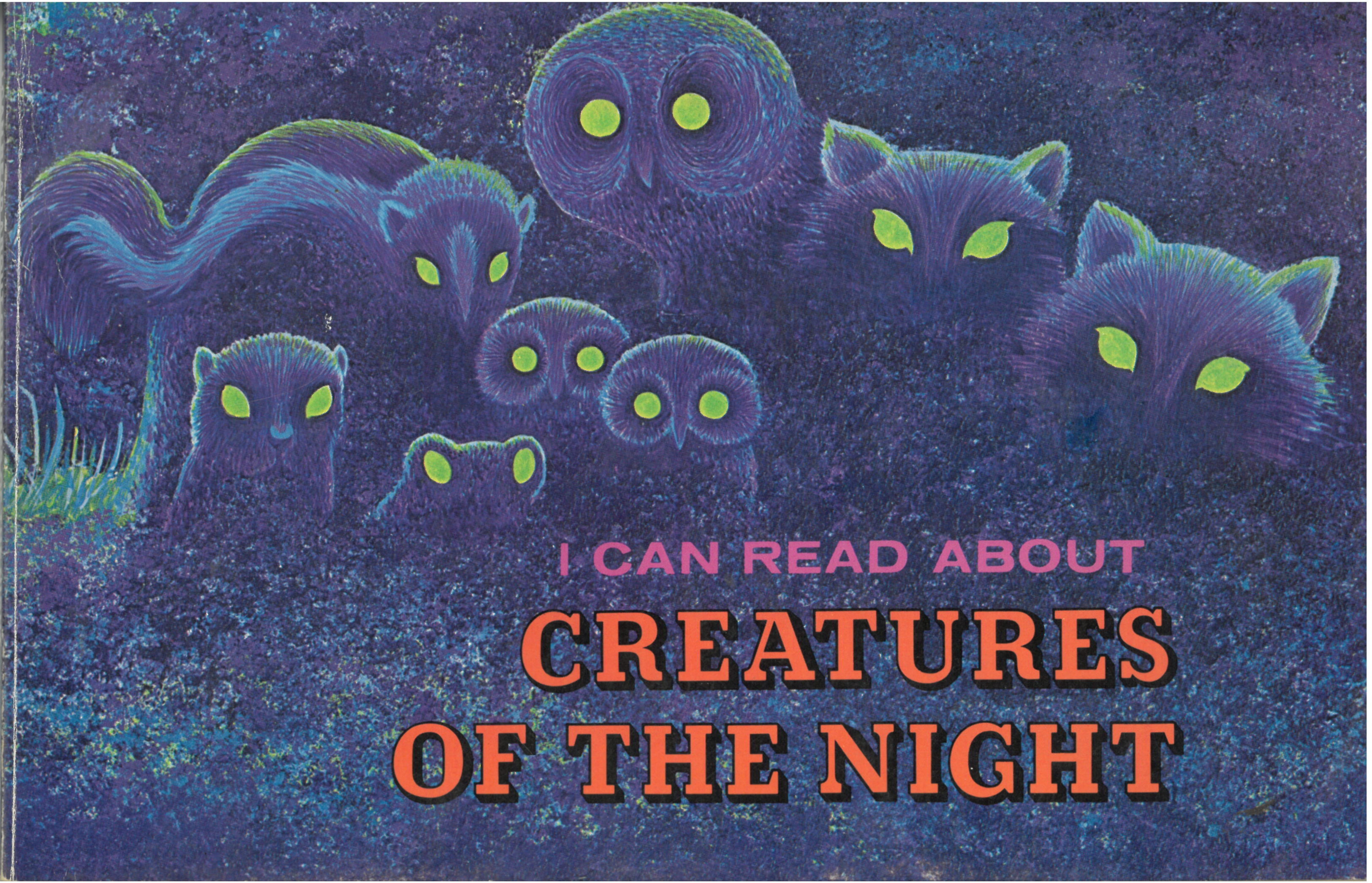
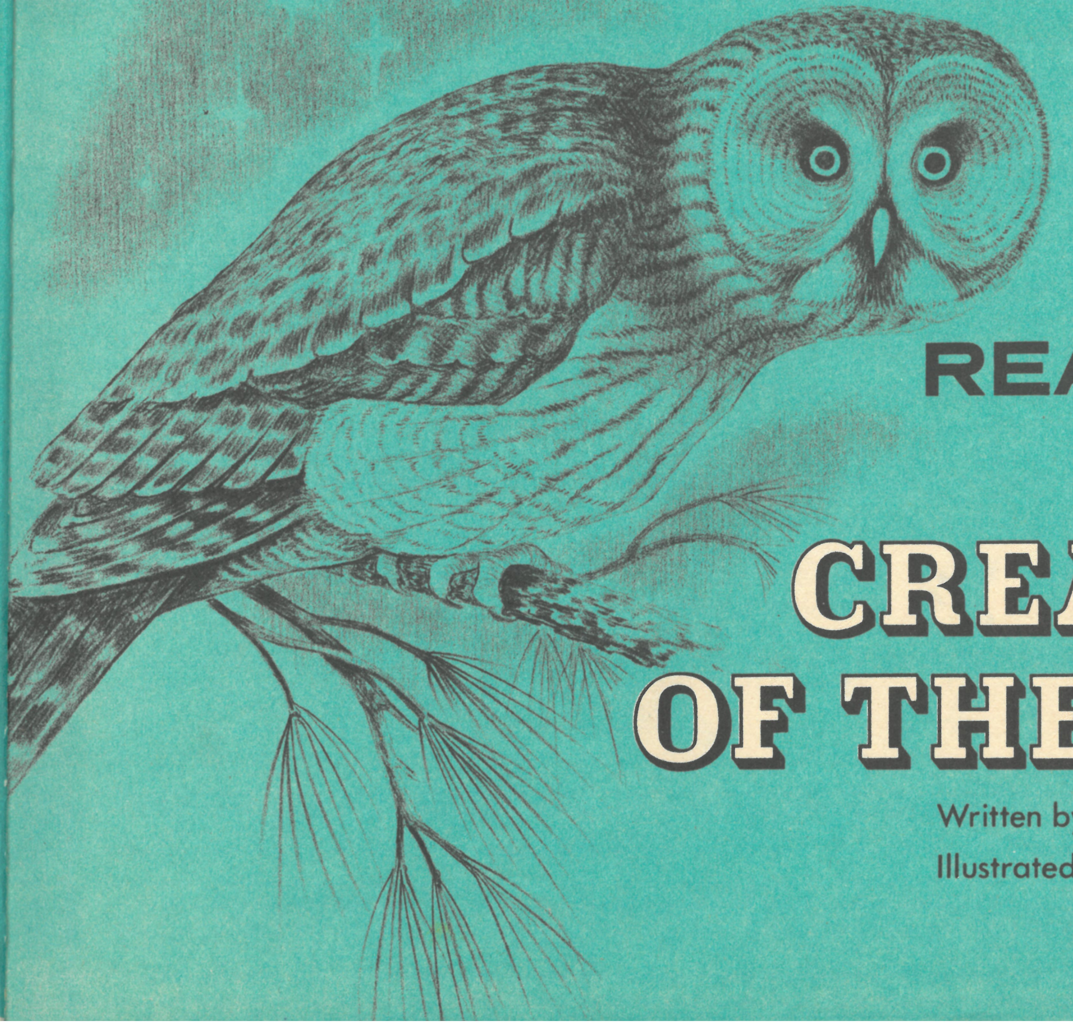


I CAN READ ABOUT

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

Lincoln Elementary Library
Hays, Kansas

Lincoln Elementary Library
Hays, Kansas

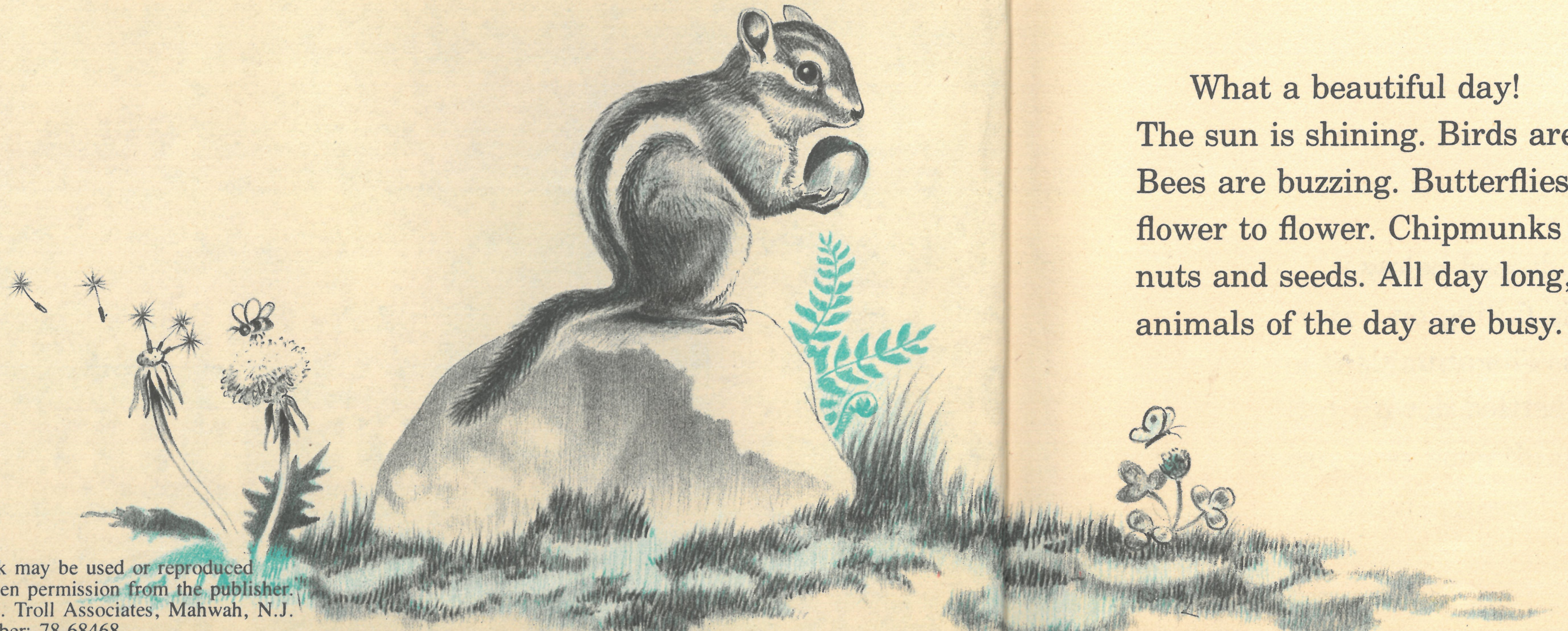


I CAN READ ABOUT CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

Written by David Cutts

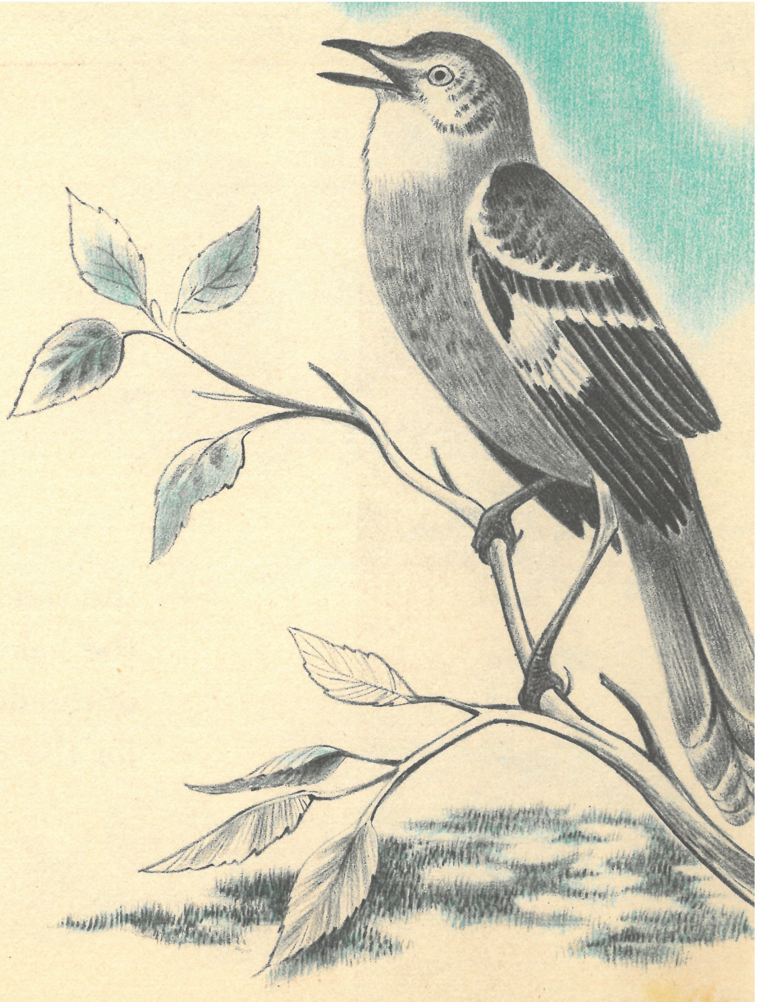
Illustrated by Jean Chandler

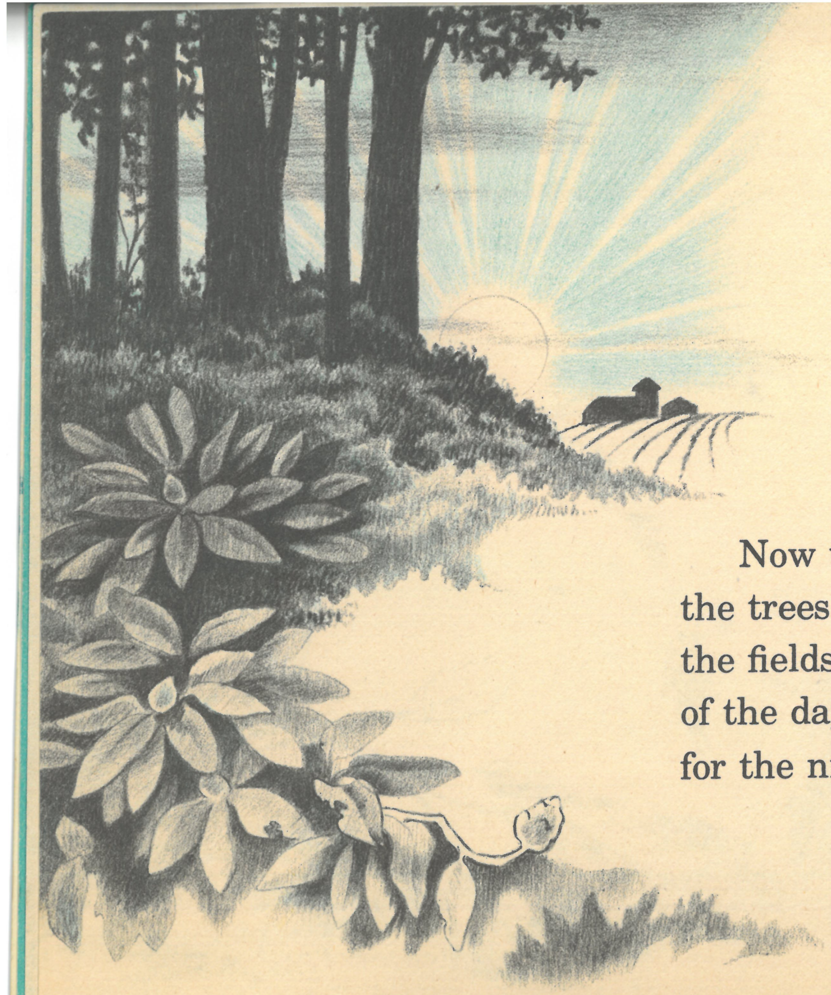
Troll Associates



Copyright ©1979 by Troll Associates
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced
in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the publisher.
Printed in the United States of America. Troll Associates, Mahwah, N.J.
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 78-68468
ISBN 0-89375-202-9

What a beautiful day! The sun is shining. Birds are singing. Bees are buzzing. Butterflies fly from flower to flower. Chipmunks scamper for nuts and seeds. All day long, the animals of the day are busy.

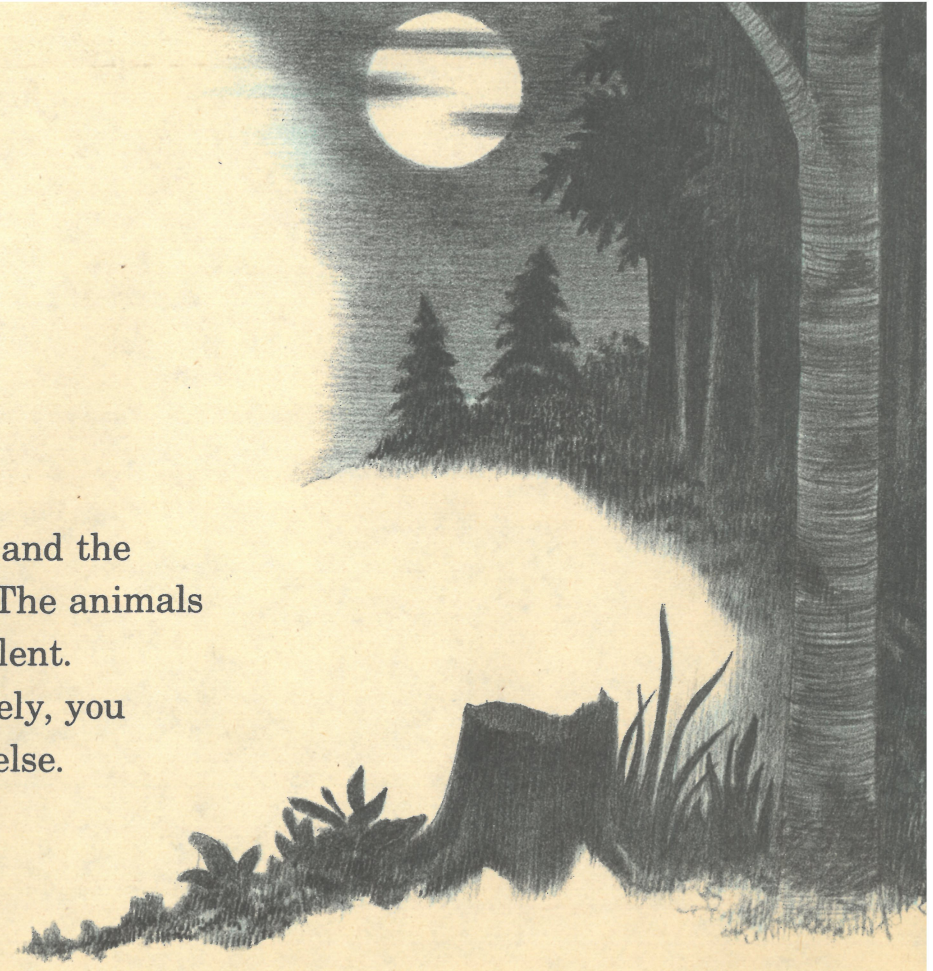


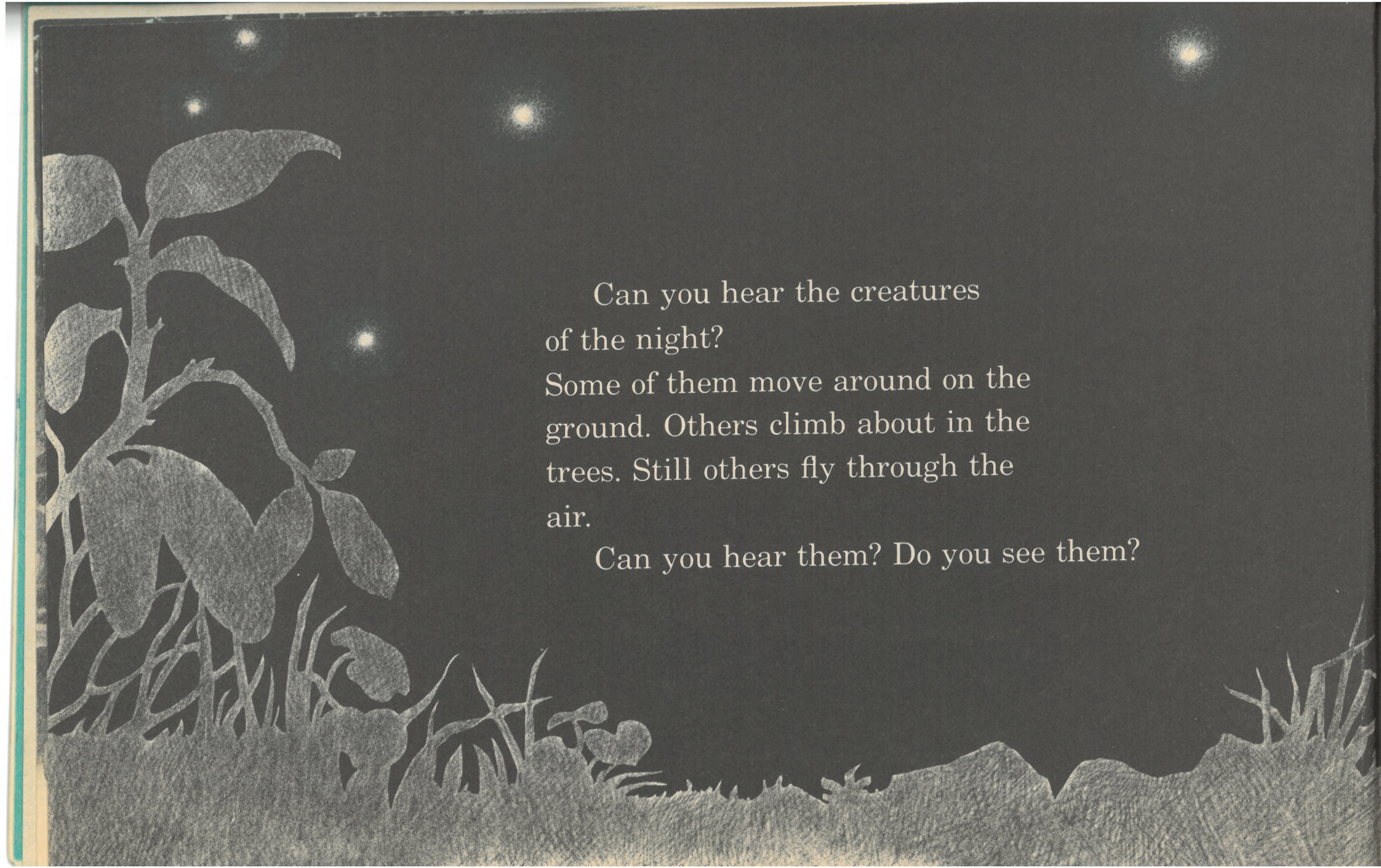


Now the sun has dipped below the trees. Darkness is falling on the fields and forests. The animals of the daytime have settled down for the night.

The moon is out, and the stars are twinkling. The animals of the daytime are silent. But if you listen closely, you can hear something else.

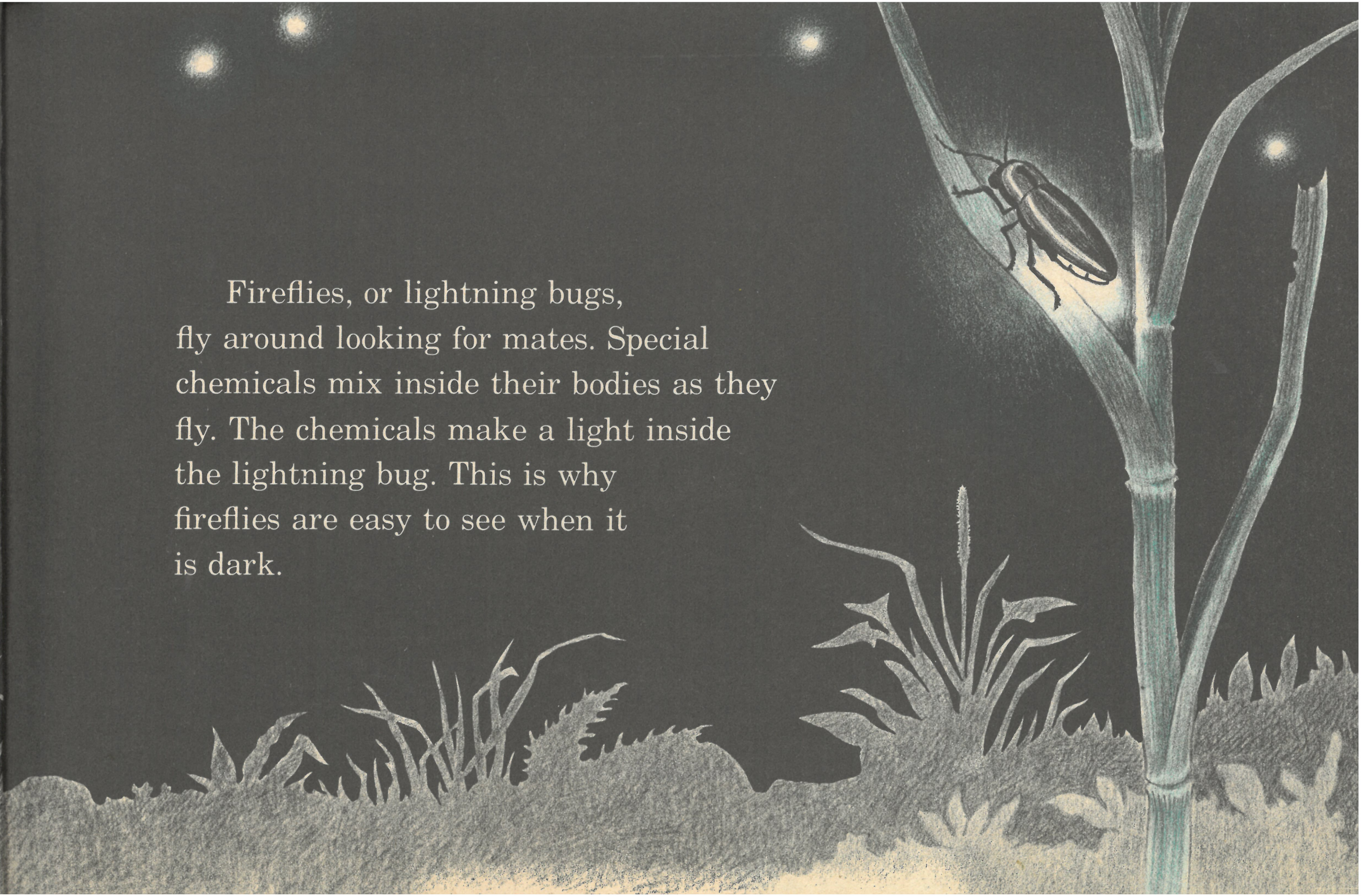
Shhh…listen!



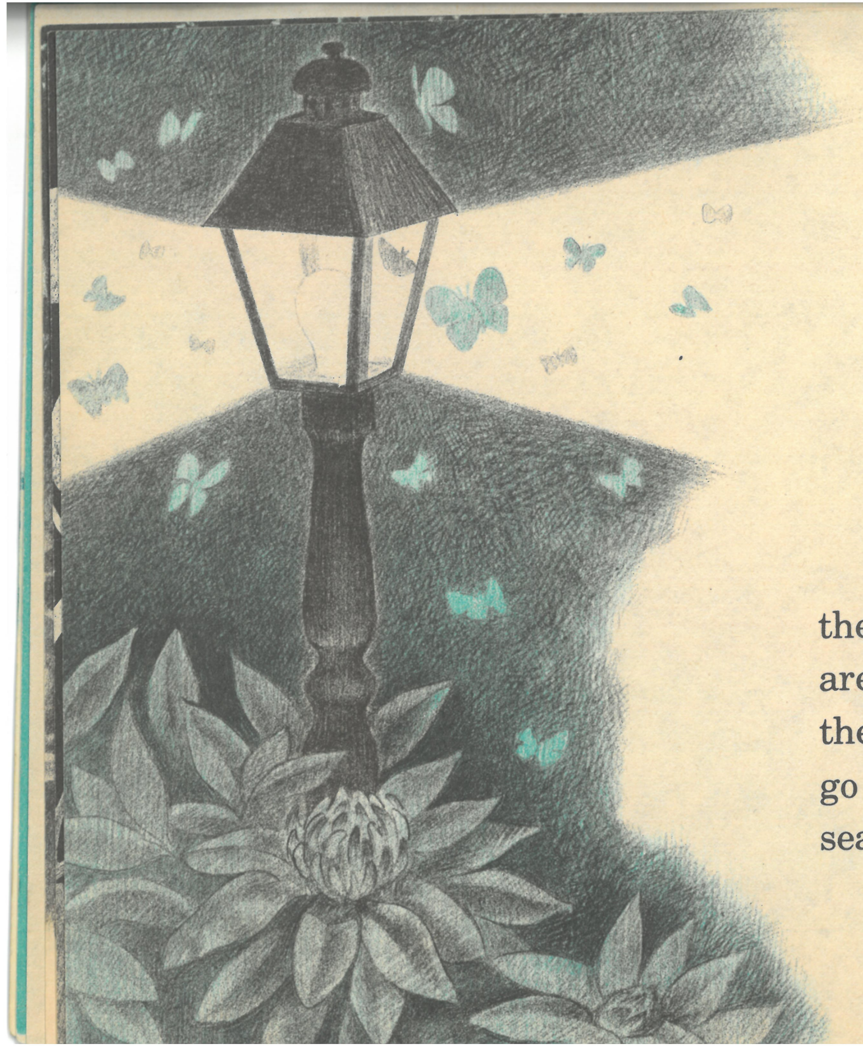


Can you hear the creatures of the night?
Some of them move around on the ground. Others climb about in the trees. Still others fly through the air.

Can you hear them? Do you see them?

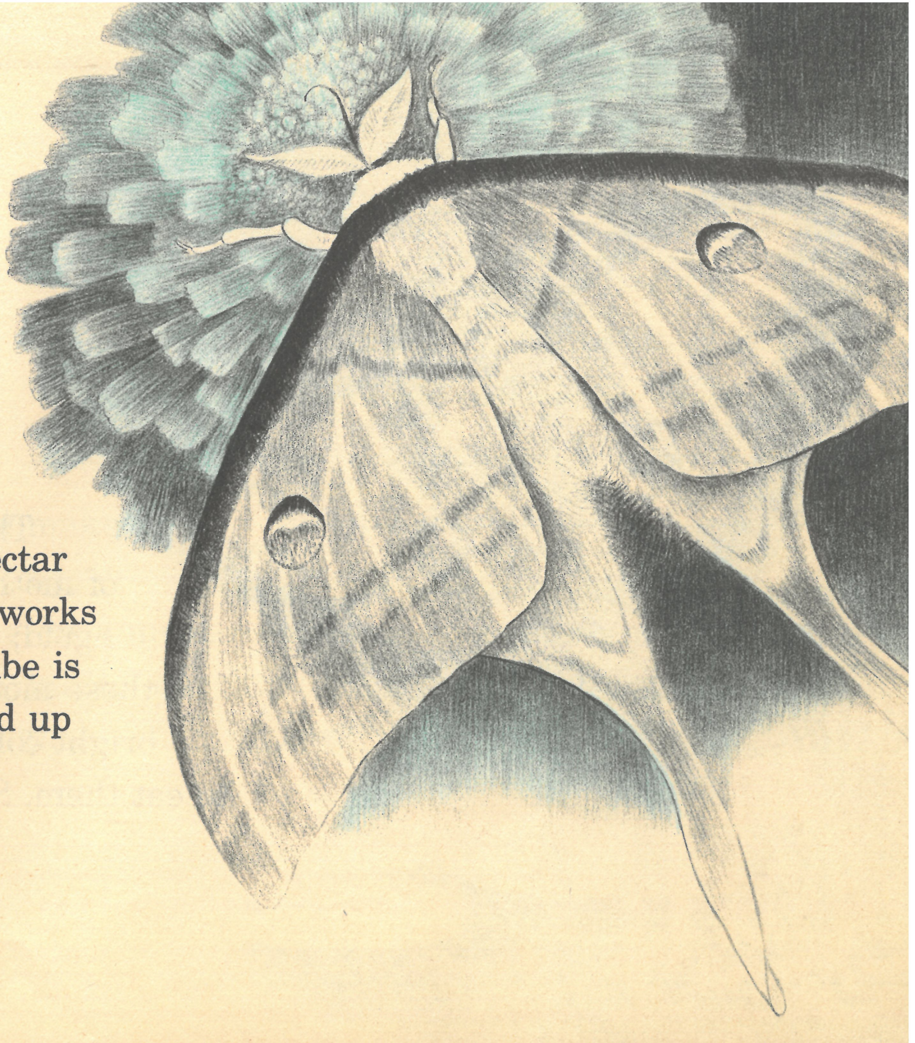


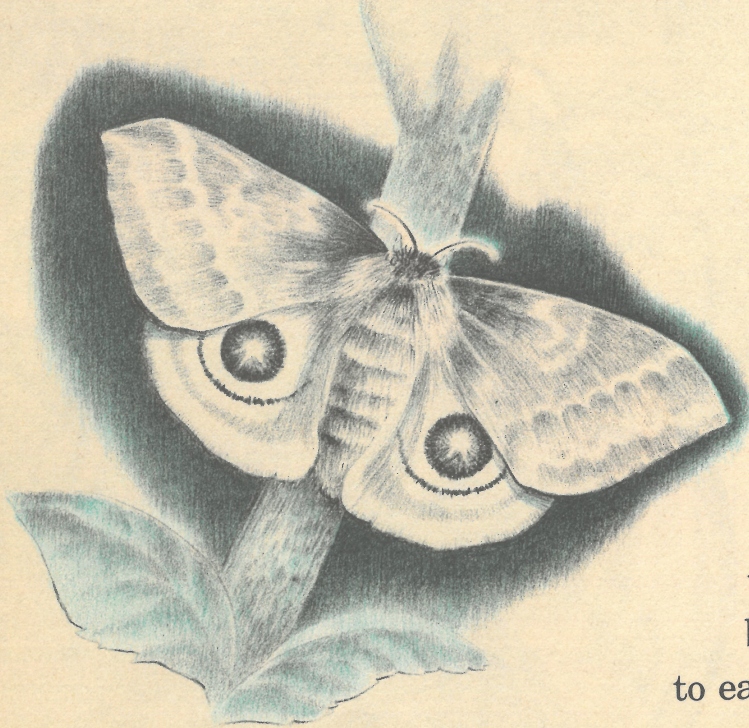
Fireflies, or lightning bugs, fly around looking for mates. Special chemicals mix inside their bodies as they fly. The chemicals make a light inside the lightning bug. This is why fireflies are easy to see when it is dark.



Moths are easy to see when they fly near bright lights. Moths are related to butterflies. But when the sun goes down and the butterflies go to sleep, the moths fly about, searching for flowers.

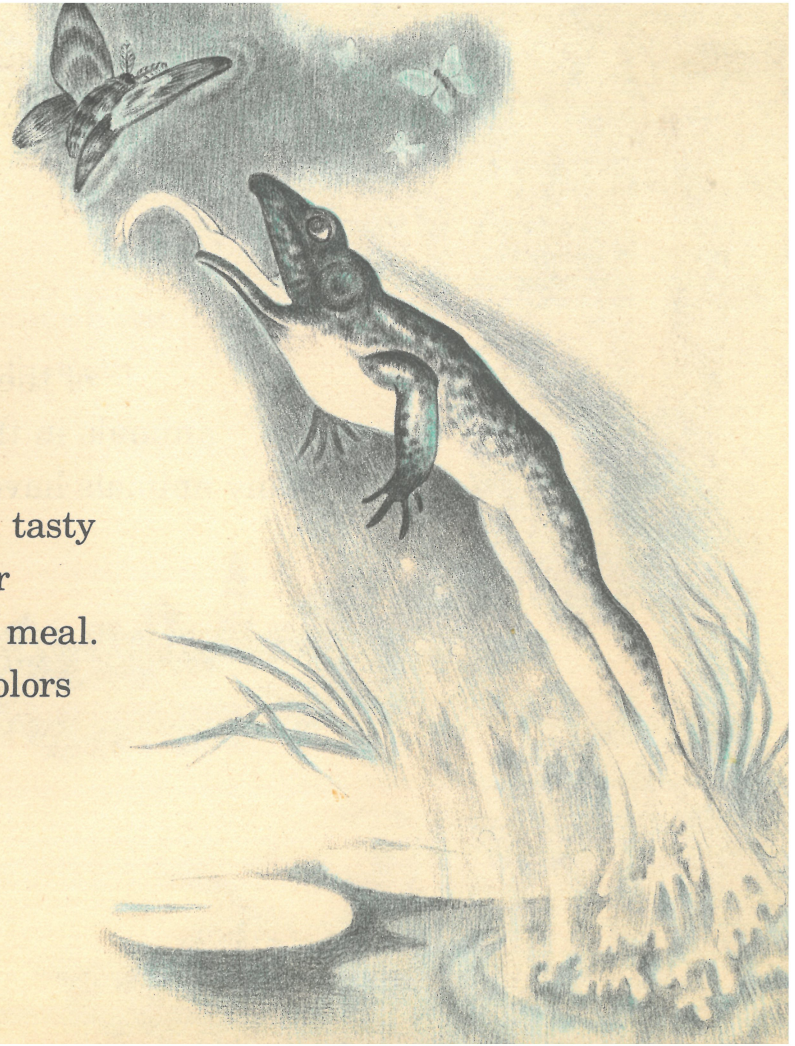
Each moth sips the nectar through a long tube that works like a straw. When the tube is not being used, it is curled up like a spring.

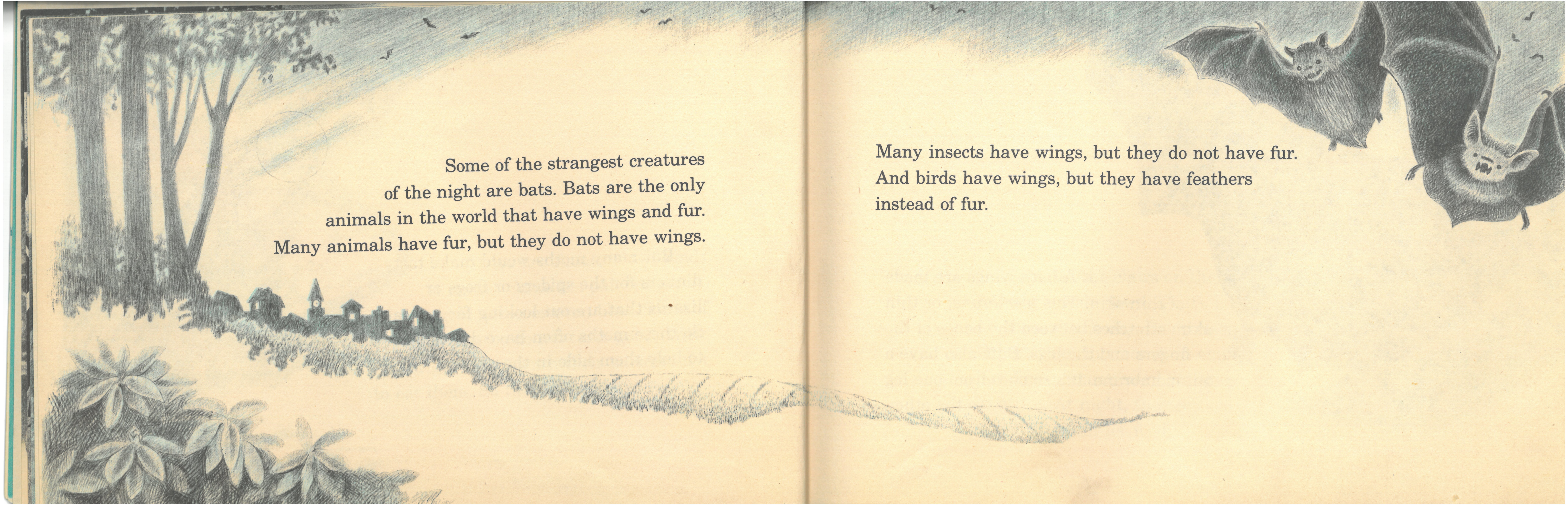




There are thousands of kinds of moths. Some are painted green, gold, pink, or even blue. Some of these moths do not taste good. Their bright colors warn their enemies not to eat them. So they do not have to hide.

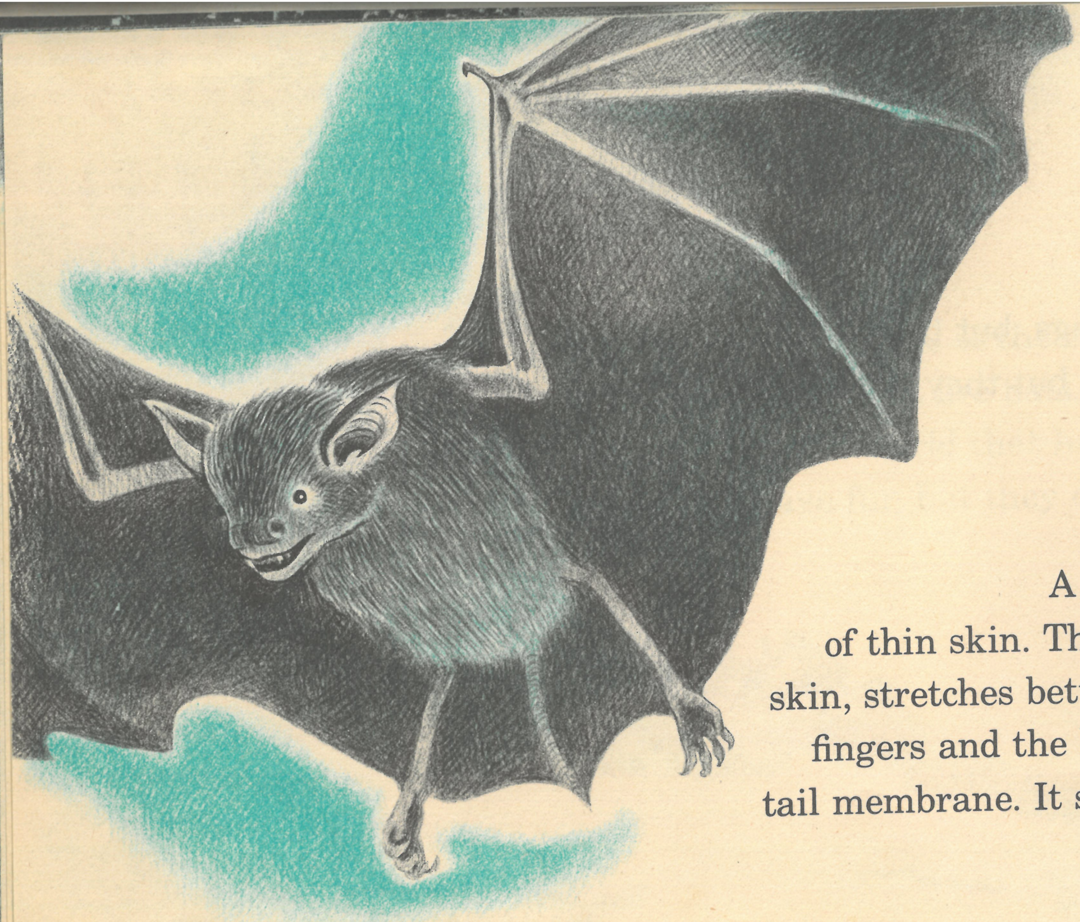
But many moths would make tasty dinners for the spiders or frogs or lizards that are out looking for a meal. So these moths often have dull colors to help them hide in the night.



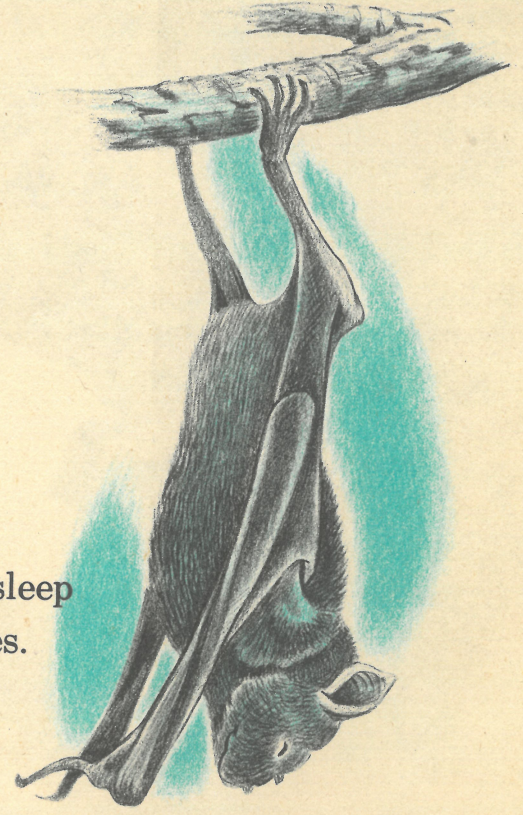


Some of the strangest creatures of the night are bats. Bats are the only animals in the world that have wings and fur. Many animals have fur, but they do not have wings.

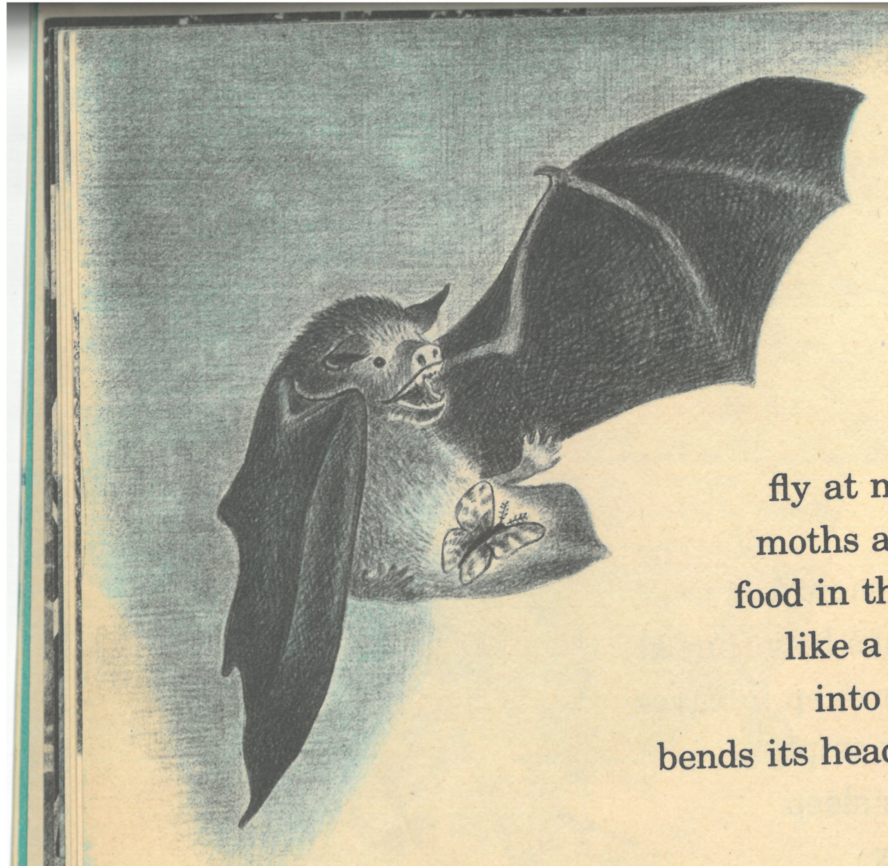
Many insects have wings, but they do not have fur. And birds have wings, but they have feathers instead of fur.



A bat's wings are made of thin skin. This *membrane,* or thin skin, stretches between the bones of the fingers and the legs. Bats also have a tail membrane. It stretches from one leg to the other.

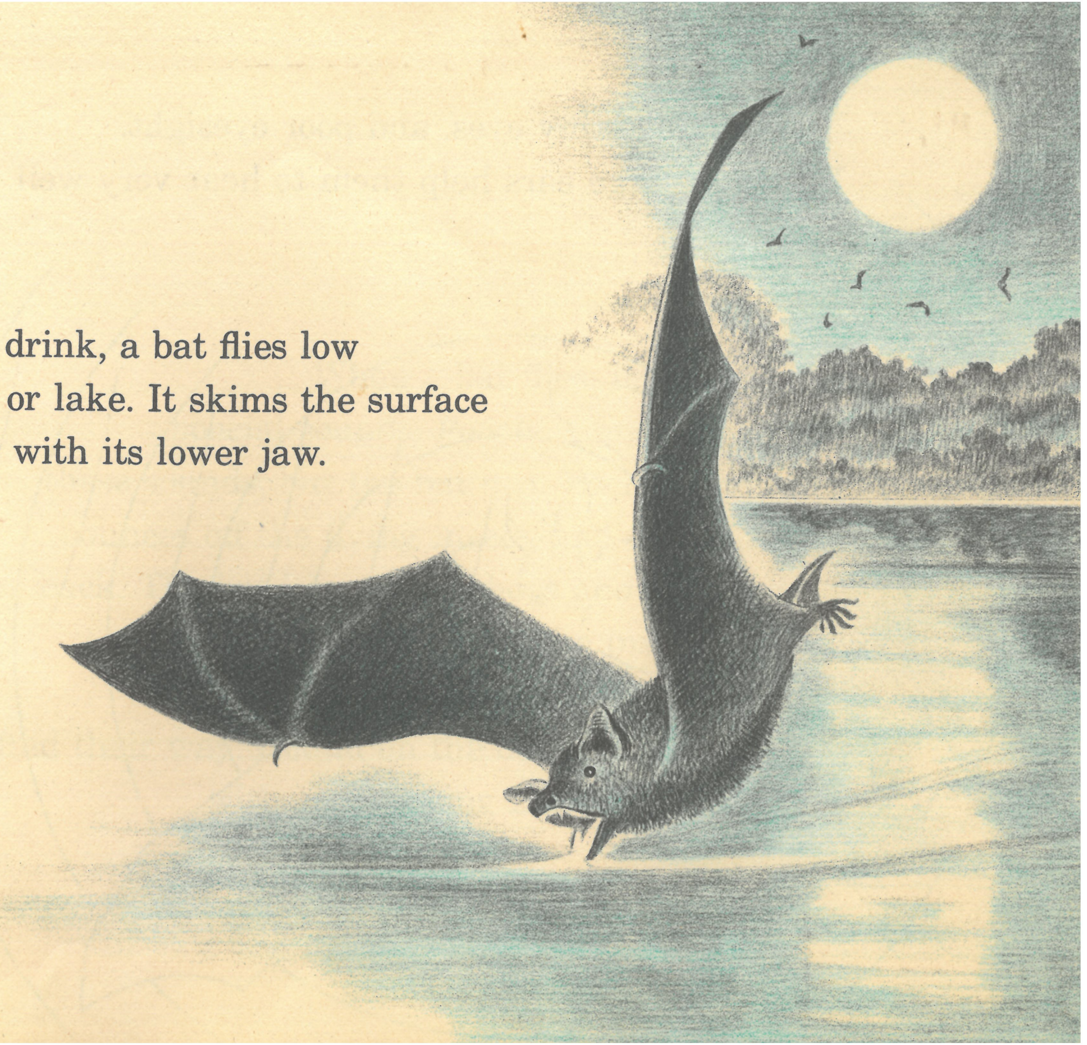


Bats use the claws on their feet to hang upside down. That's how they sleep all through the day. Some sleep in caves. Others sleep in trees or in empty buildings. Sometimes bats sleep in attics. At night, they fly outside to hunt for food.

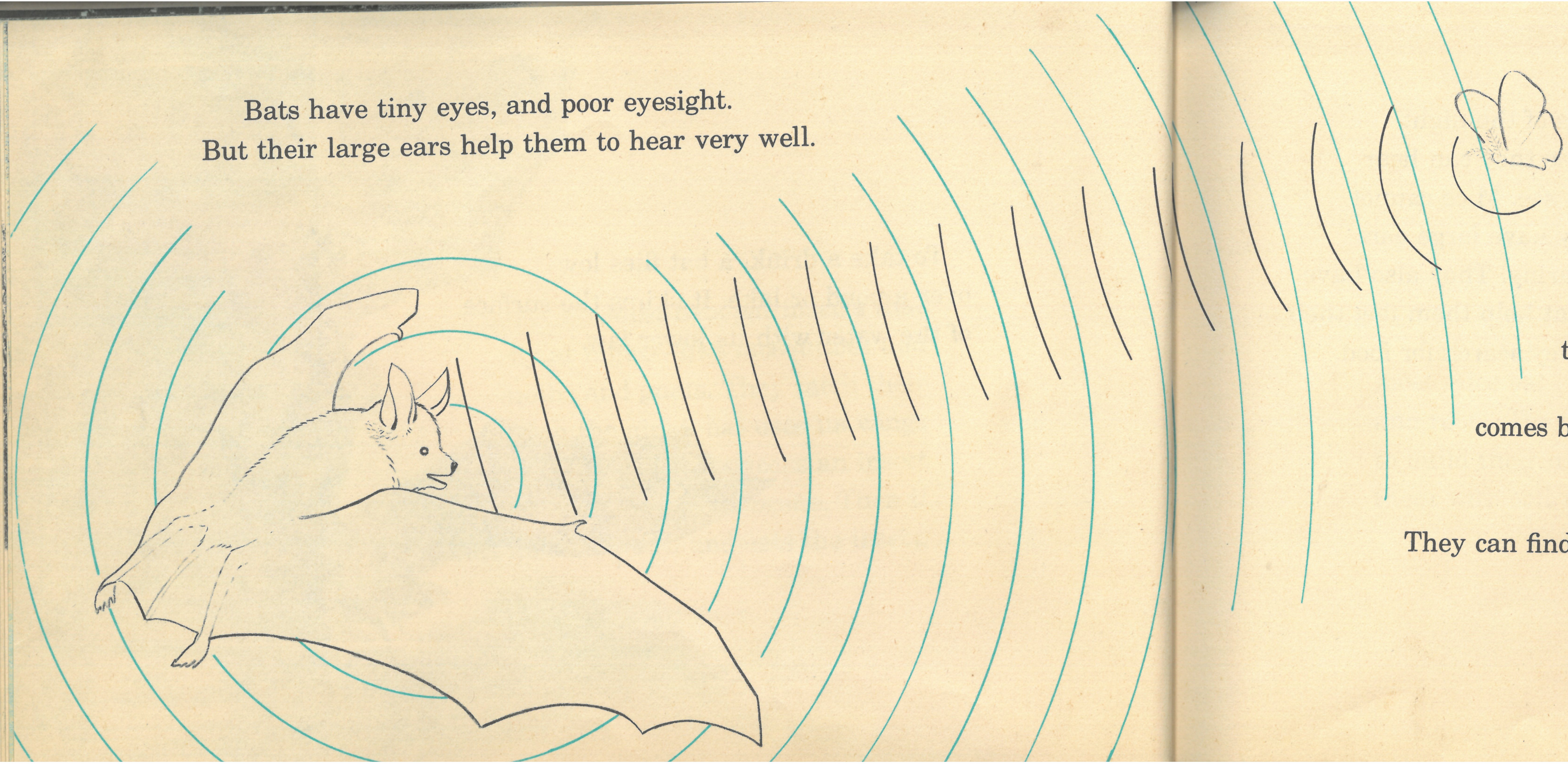


Most bats eat insects that fly at night—like mosquitoes and moths and gnats. They catch their food in the air. A bat uses its wings like a broom. It sweeps an insect into its tail membrane. Then it bends its head down and eats the insect.

To take a drink, a bat flies low over a pond or lake. It skims the surface of the water with its lower jaw.

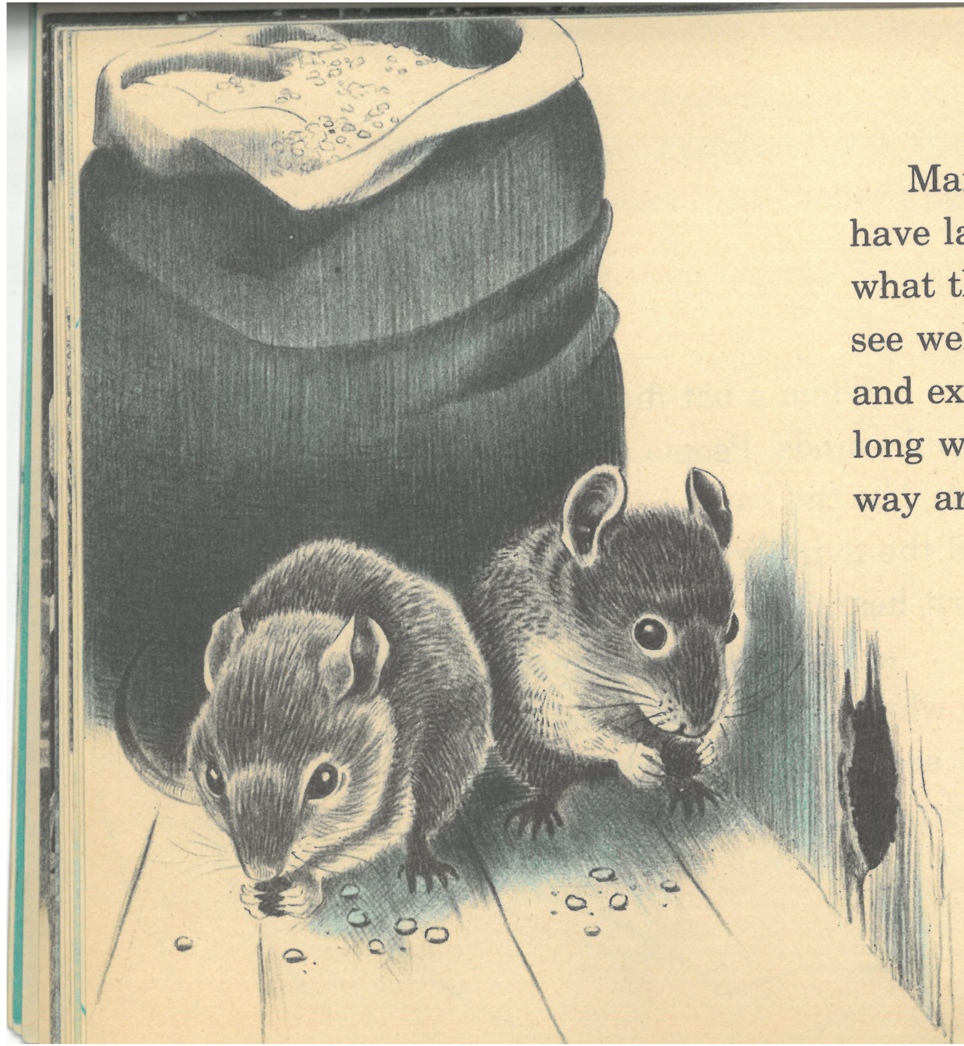


Bats have tiny eyes, and poor eyesight.
But their large ears help them to hear very well.



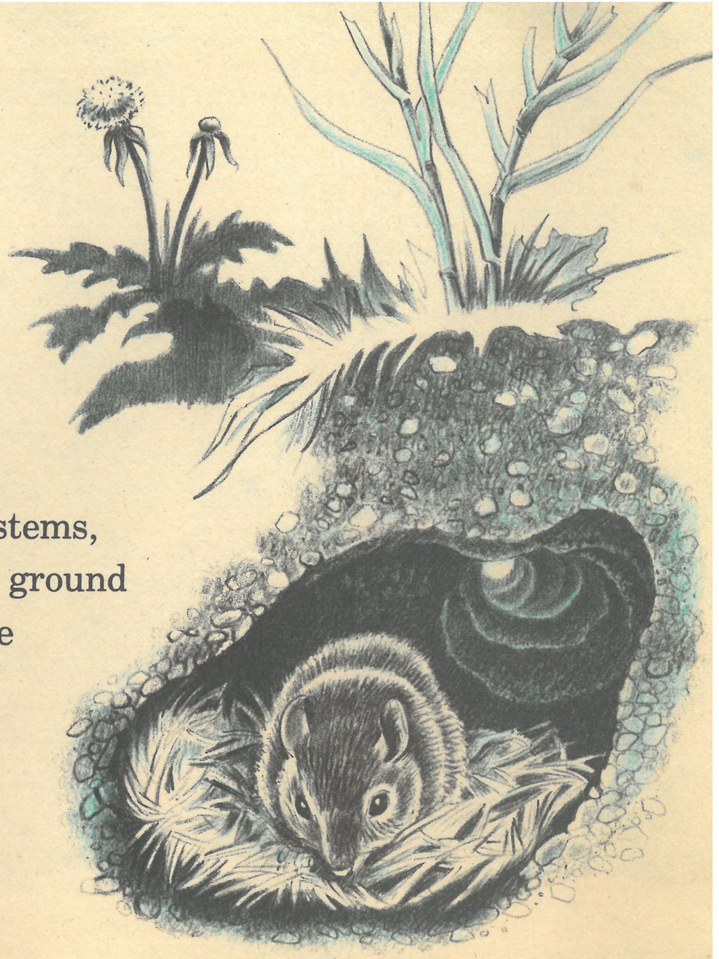
When a bat flies, it makes special sounds. People cannot hear these sounds, but the bat can. Each sound bounces off the flying insect, and an echo comes back. The bat hears the echoes and knows exactly where the insect is.

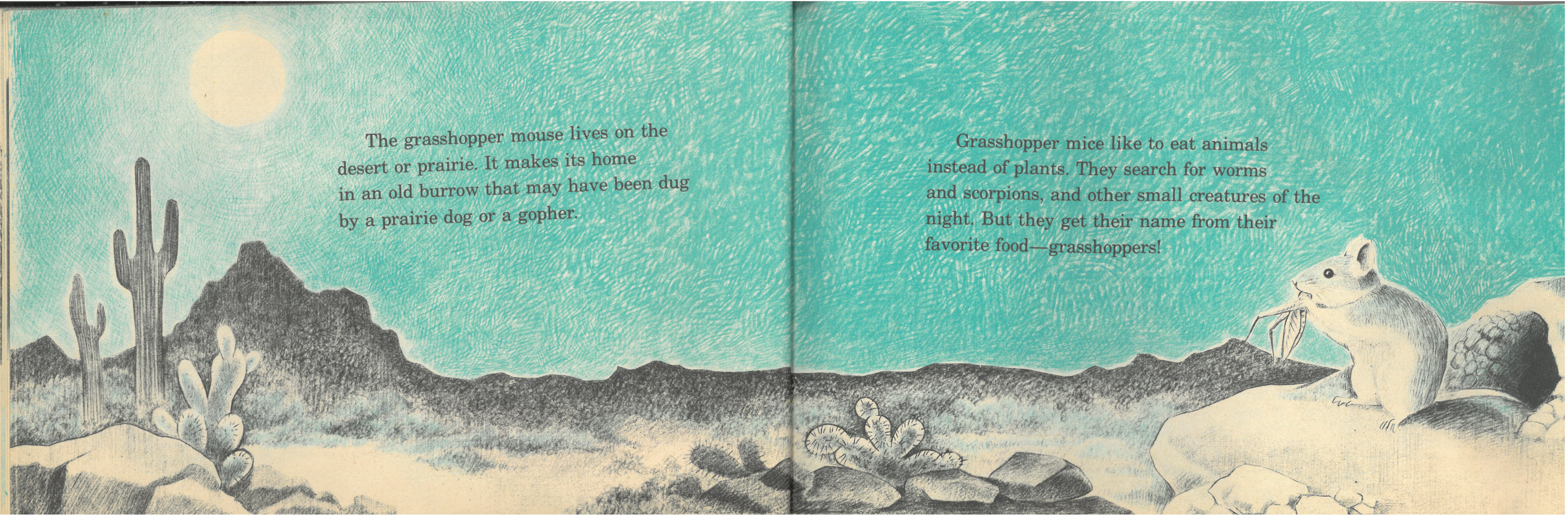
That's why bats are such good flyers. They can find their way around on the darkest nights, without bumping into anything.



Many animals of the night have large ears, so they can hear what they do not see. Mice cannot see well, but they have large ears and excellent hearing. They also have long whiskers that help them feel their way around as they search for food.

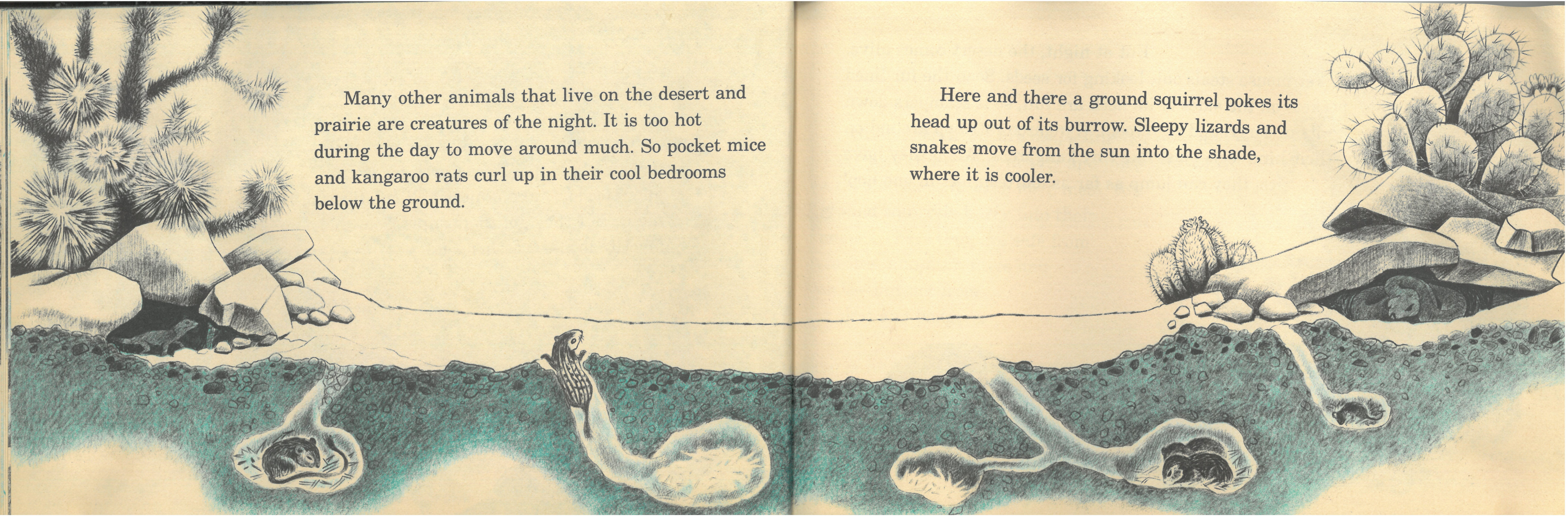
In fields and forests, most mice eat seeds, grain, plant stems, and roots. They dig down into the ground to build their nests. Then they line them with soft grass.





The grasshopper mouse lives on the desert or prairie. It makes its home in an old burrow that may have been dug by a prairie dog or a gopher.

Grasshopper mice like to eat animals instead of plants. They search for worms and scorpions, and other small creatures of the night. But they get their name from their favorite food—grasshoppers!

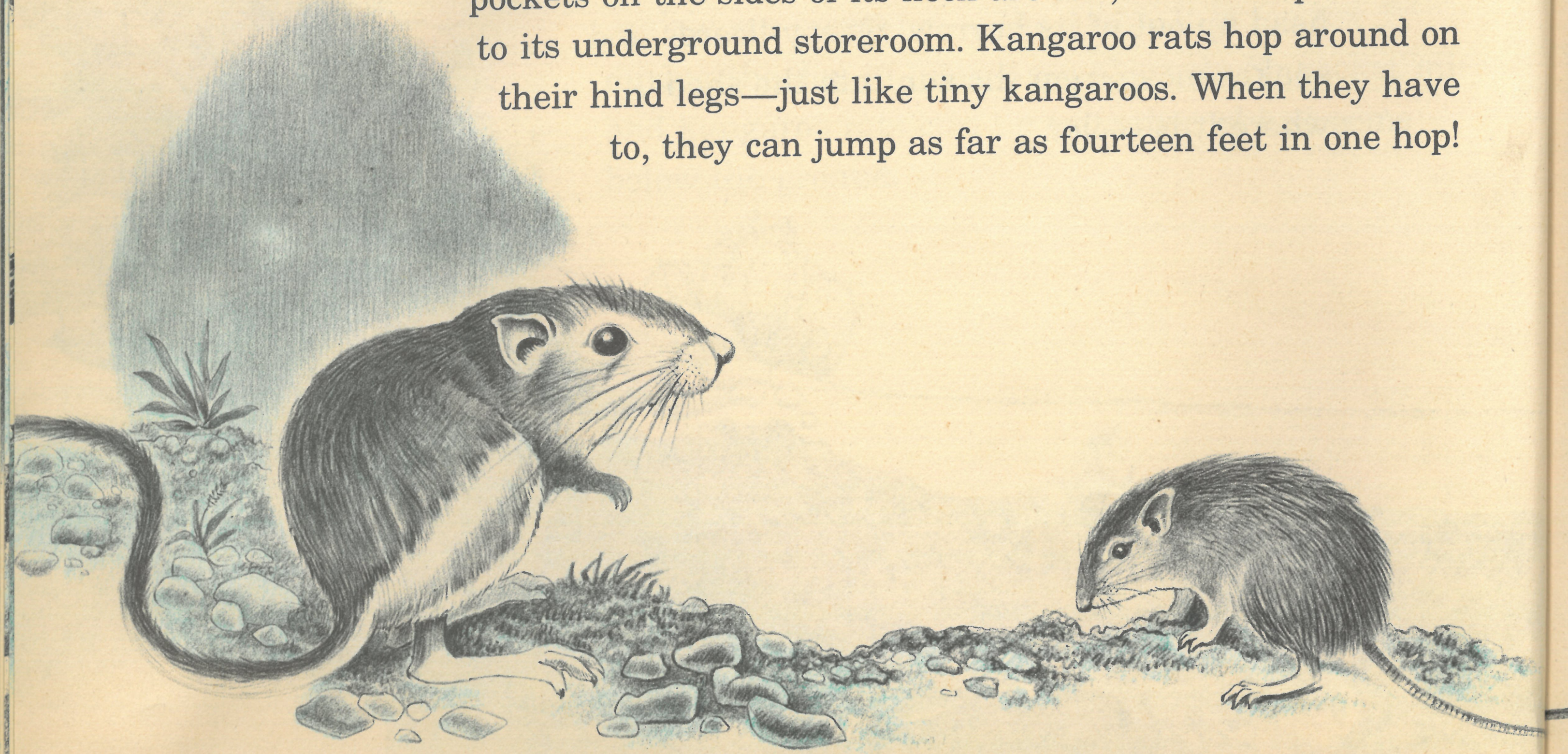


Many other animals that live on the desert and prairie are creatures of the night. It is too hot during the day to move around much. So pocket mice and kangaroo rats curl up in their cool bedrooms below the ground.

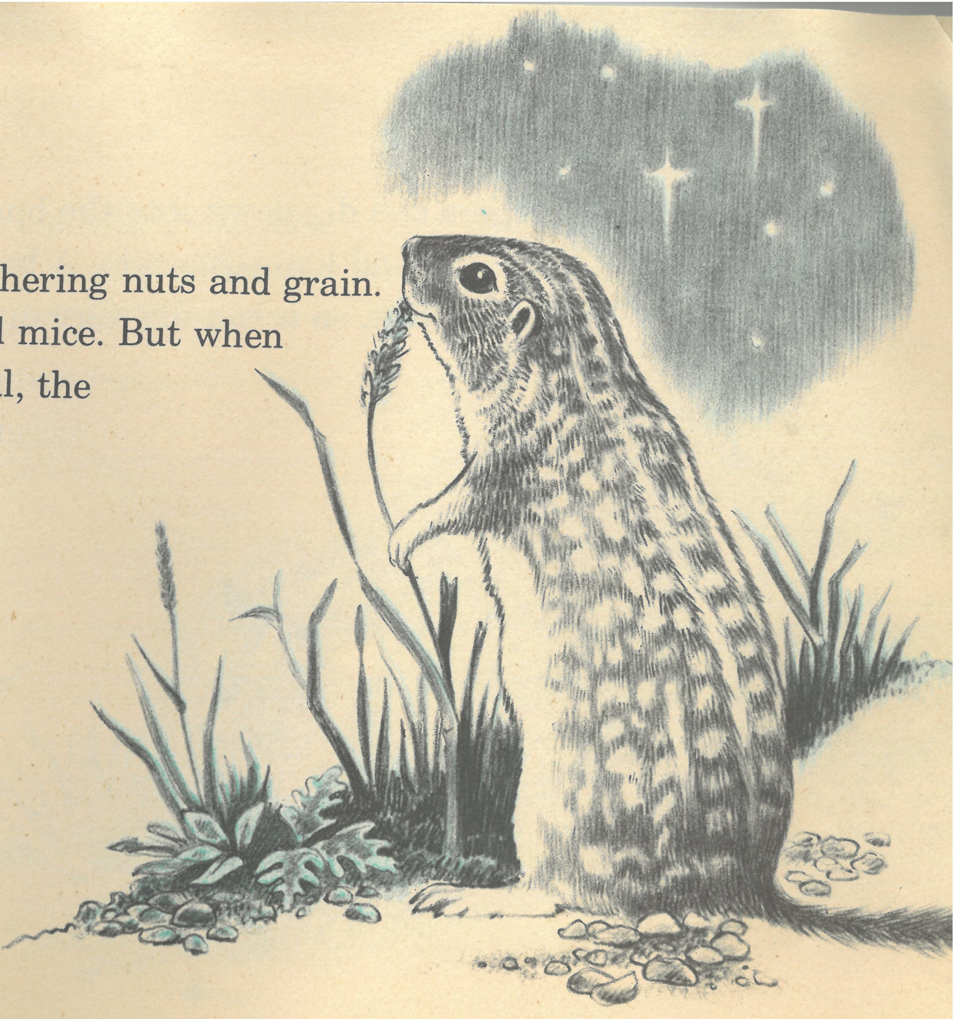
Here and there a ground squirrel pokes its head up out of its burrow. Sleepy lizards and snakes move from the sun into the shade, where it is cooler.

But at night, the desert comes alive.

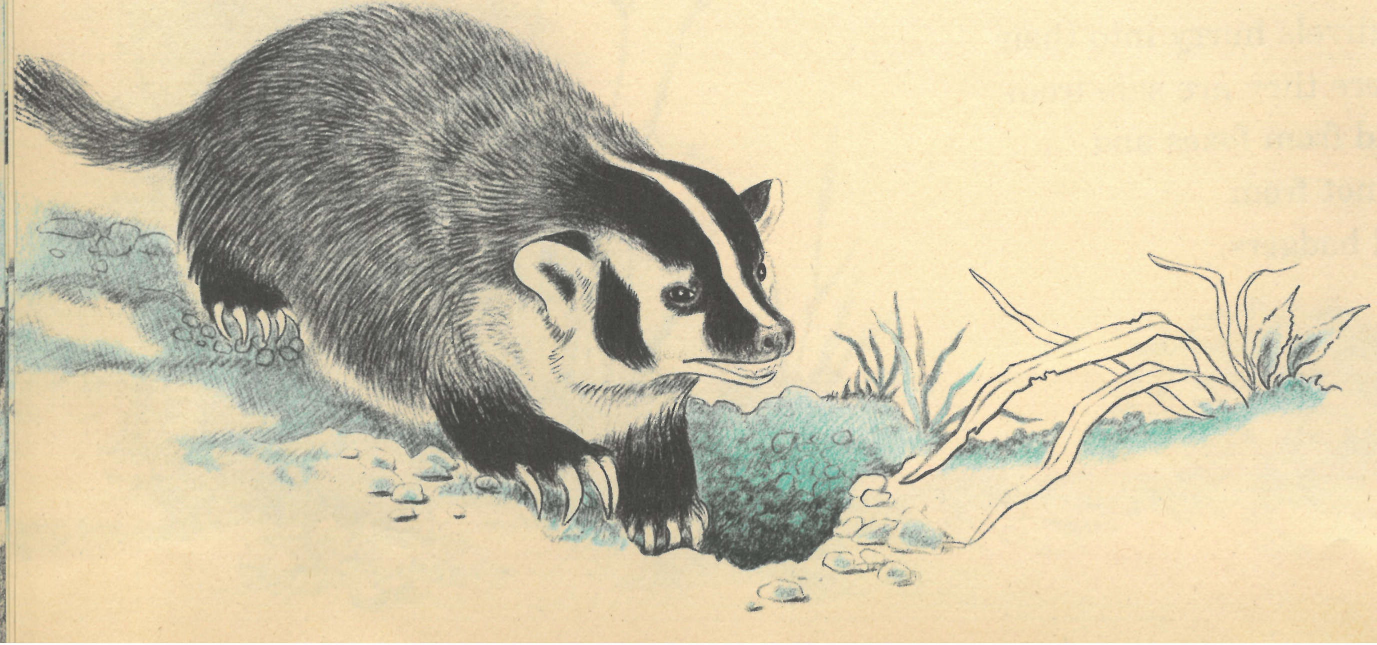
A pocket mouse steals out, looking for seeds. Soon the fur-lined pockets on the sides of its neck are full, so it scampers down to its underground storeroom. Kangaroo rats hop around on their hind legs—just like tiny kangaroos. When they have to, they can jump as far as fourteen feet in one hop!



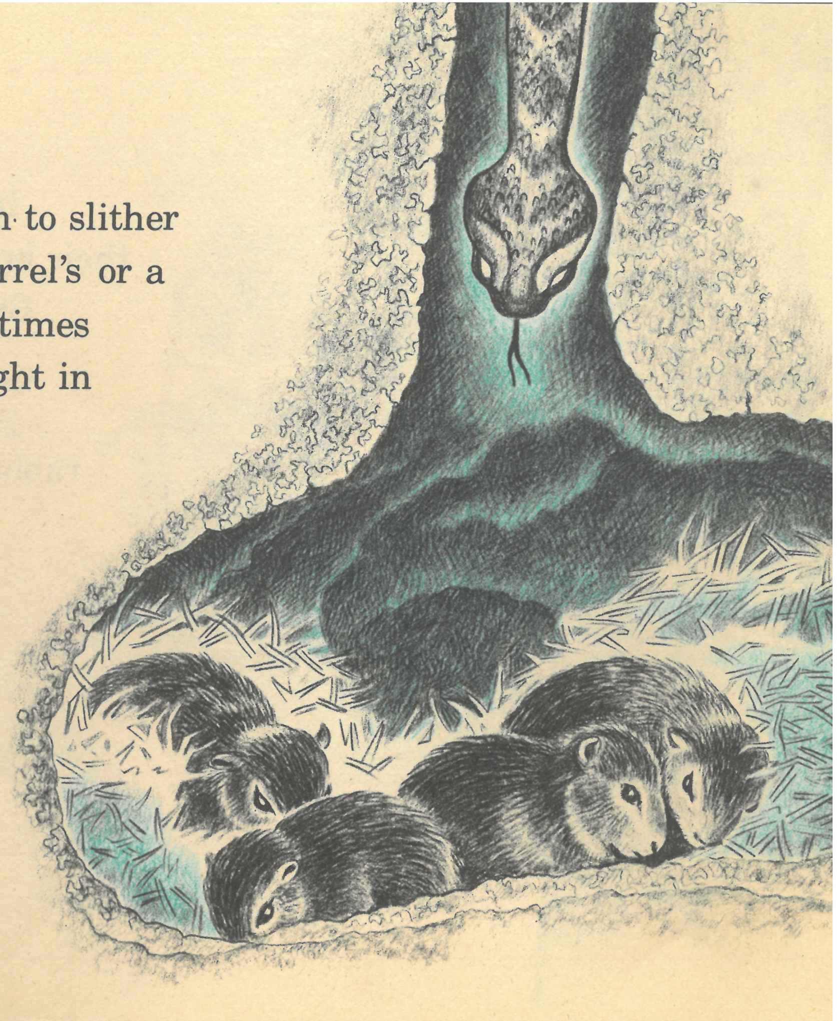
Ground squirrels are out, gathering nuts and grain. They also chase after insects and mice. But when a coyote comes looking for a meal, the ground squirrels hurry into their homes. There they are safe from coyotes, and from foxes and owls—but not from snakes and badgers.

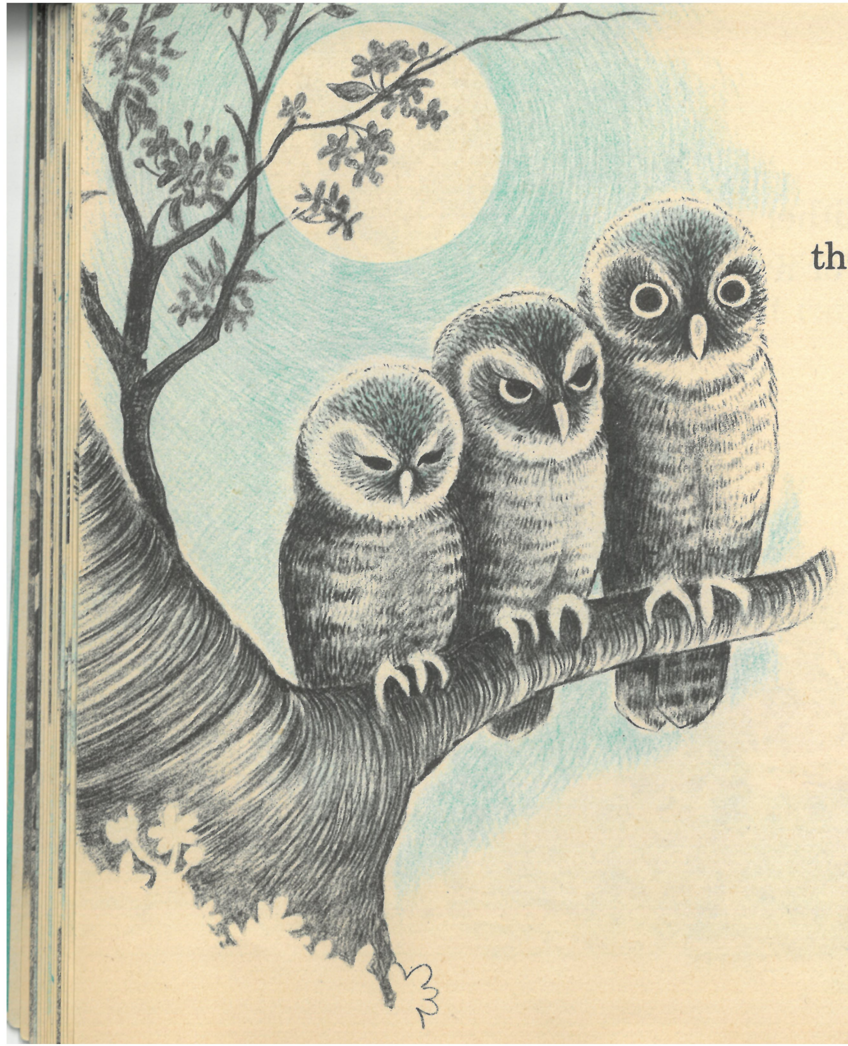


Badgers can dig down into the burrows of ground squirrels, pocket mice, and kangaroo rats. A badger has large strong claws on its front feet, so it can dig very quickly.



Snakes are thin enough to slither down inside a ground squirrel's or a prairie dog's burrow. Sometimes a rattlesnake will move right in and make itself at home.

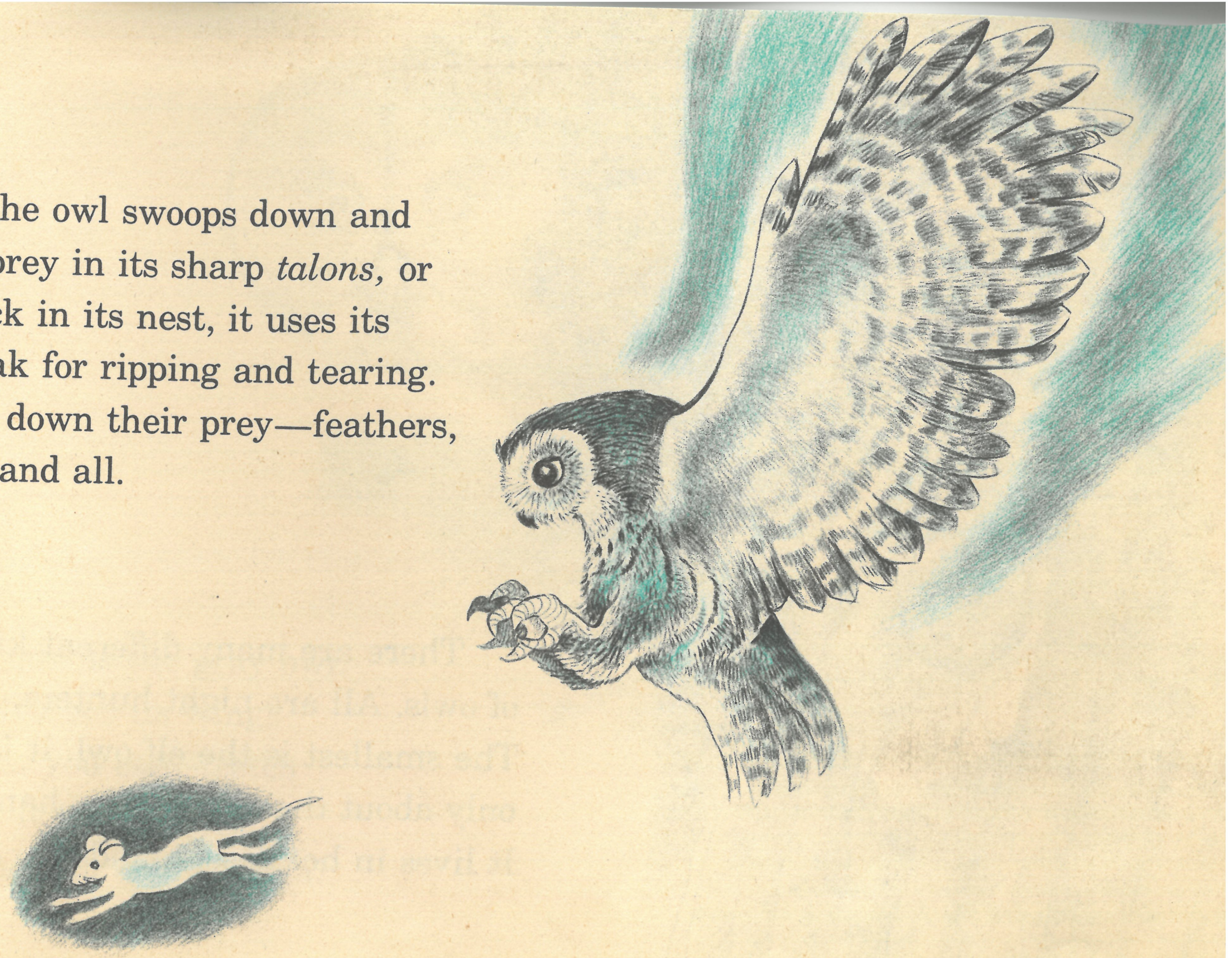


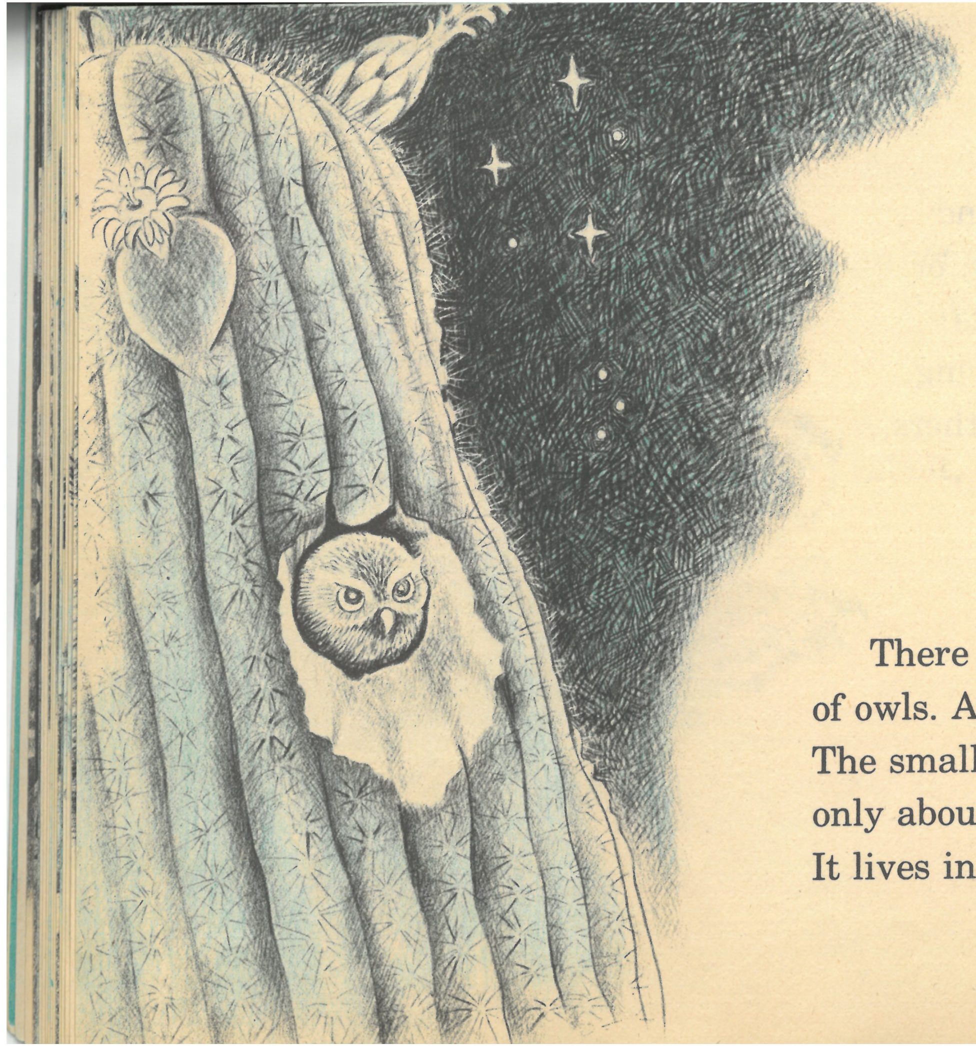


In the desert, owls sometimes make their homes in hollowed-out cactus plants. But in the forest they roost, or settle down to rest, in trees.

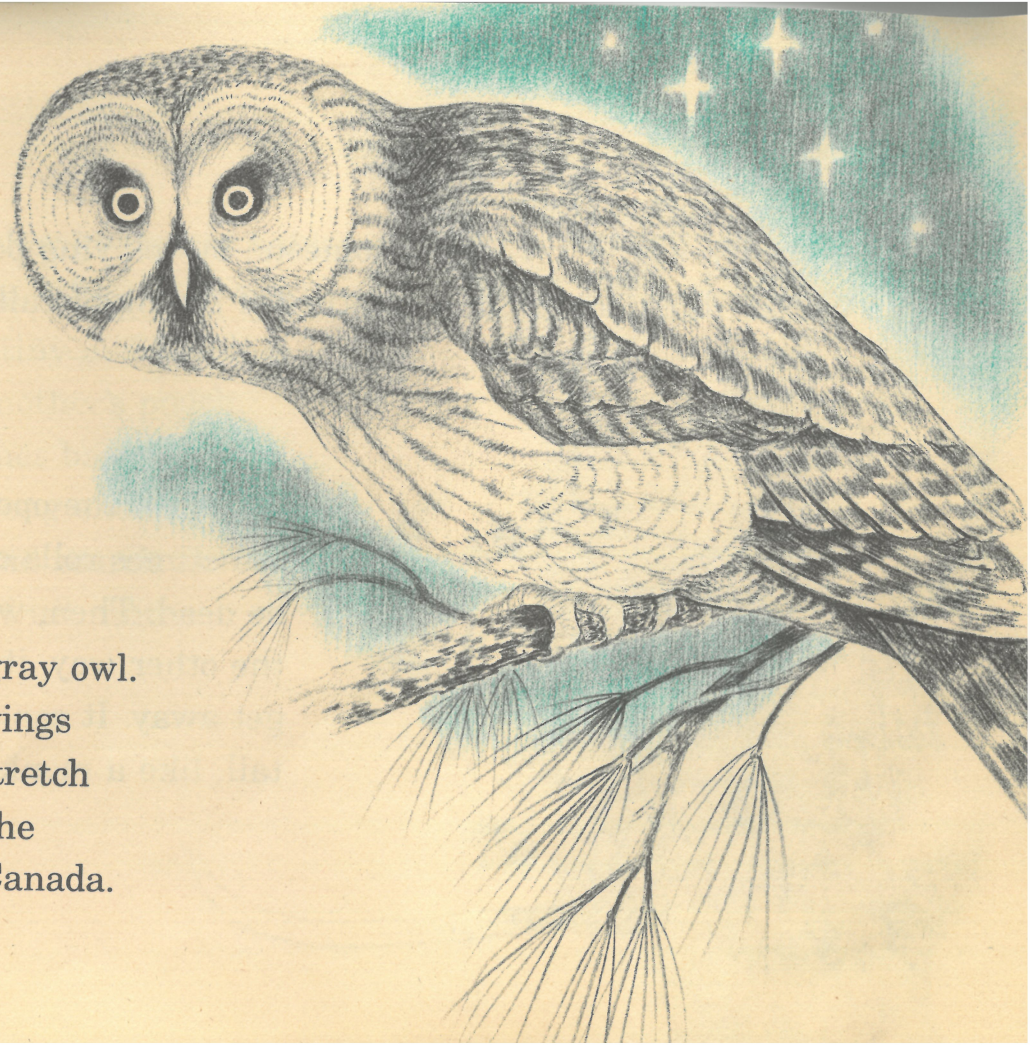
Their big eyes can spot a mouse, rabbit, or squirrel on the darkest night.

Then the owl swoops down and grabs its prey in its sharp *talons,* or claws. Back in its nest, it uses its curved beak for ripping and tearing. Owls gulp down their prey—feathers, fur, bones and all.



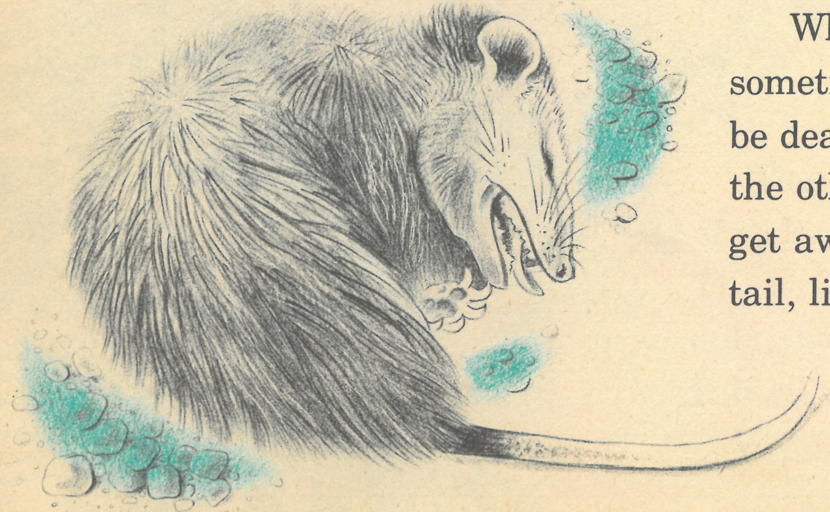


There are many different kinds of owls. All are night hunters. The smallest is the elf owl. It is only about the size of your hand. It lives in hot desert lands.



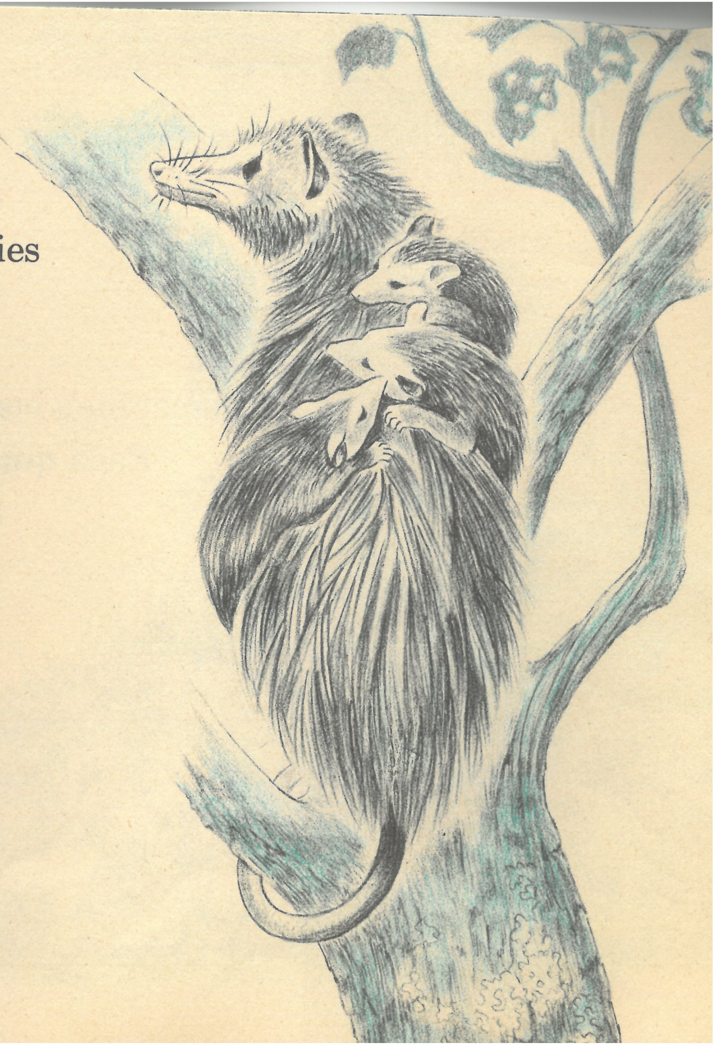
The largest is the gray owl. It can stretch out its wings farther than you can stretch your arms. It lives in the forests of Alaska and Canada.

Did you ever try to fool someone by "playing possum"? We get this name from a creature of the night called the opossum.

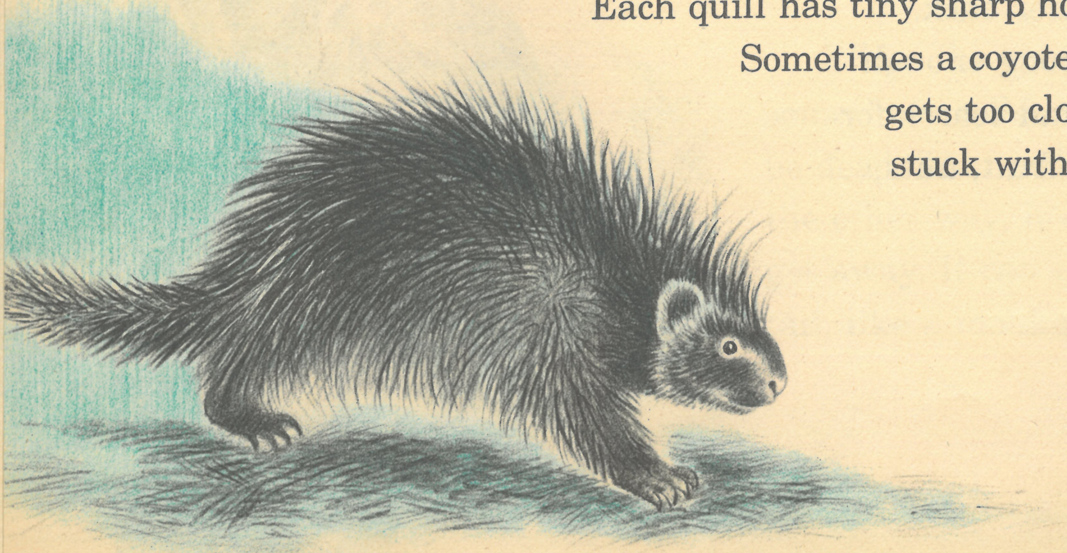


When the opossum is afraid, it sometimes rolls over and pretends to be dead. Then, when its enemy looks the other way, it climbs a tree to get away. It can even hang by its tail, like a monkey.

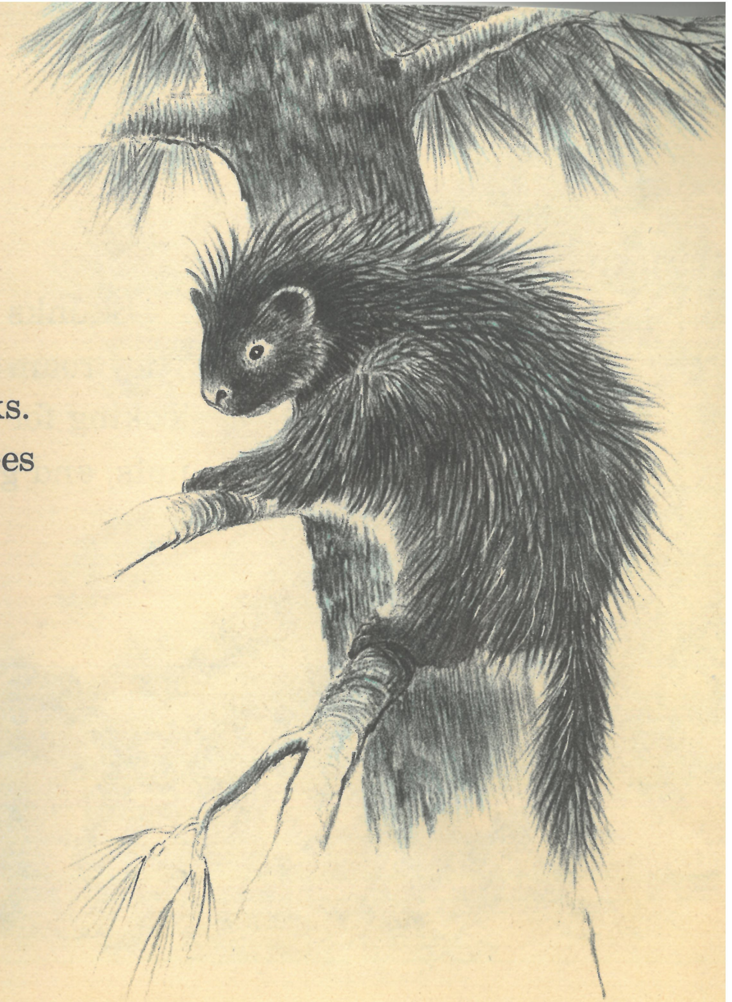
An opossum mother keeps her babies with her all the time. When they are born, they are very tiny and helpless. They stay in their mother's pouch. Later, they ride on her back. Finally, they are strong enough to walk and climb and search for food. "Possums" eat fruit, nuts, and tender plants.

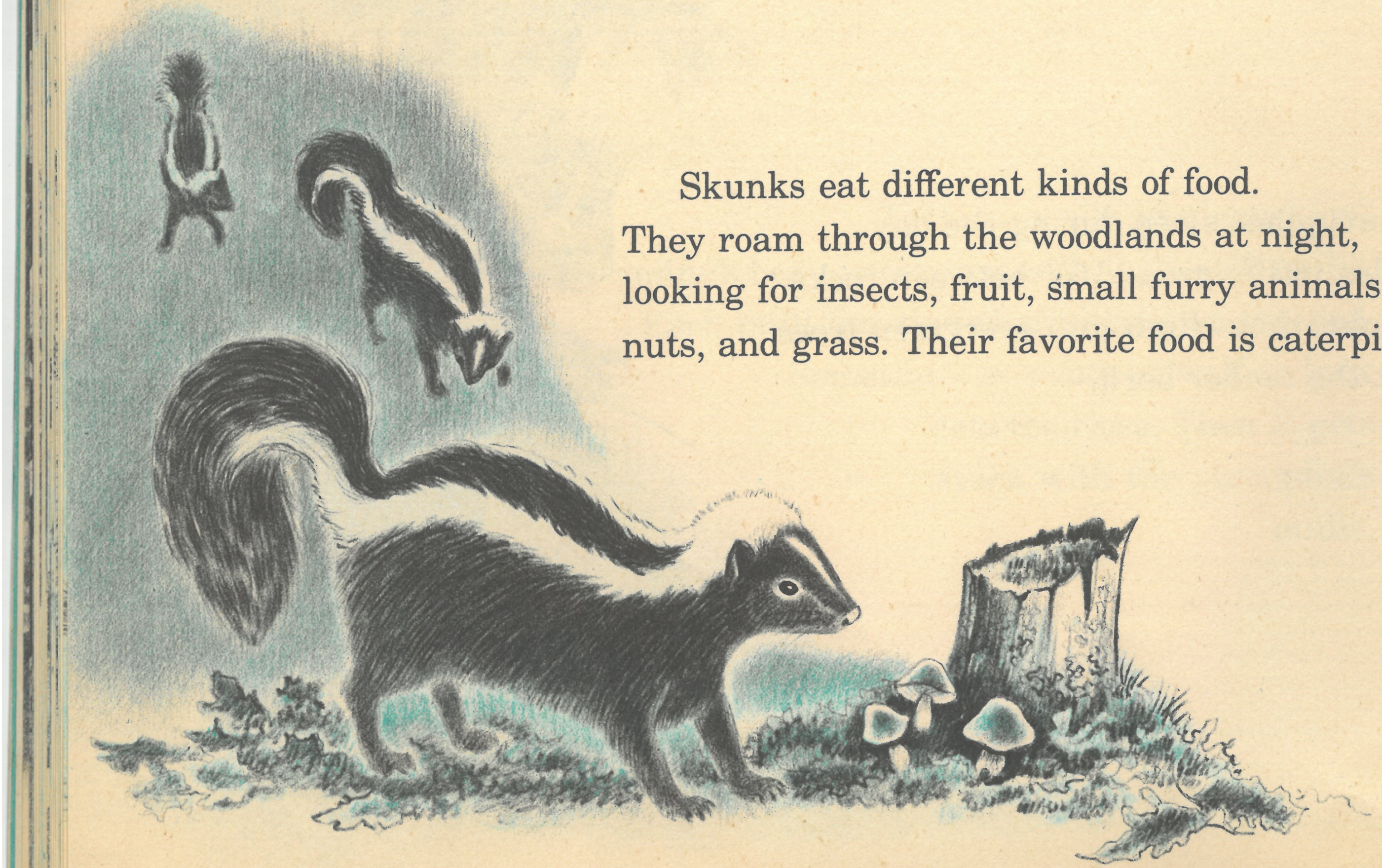


Is this a walking pincushion?
A porcupine's body is covered with long, stiff quills.
Each quill has tiny sharp hooks on the end.
Sometimes a coyote or wolf or lynx
gets too close. Then it gets
stuck with the porcupine's
quills.



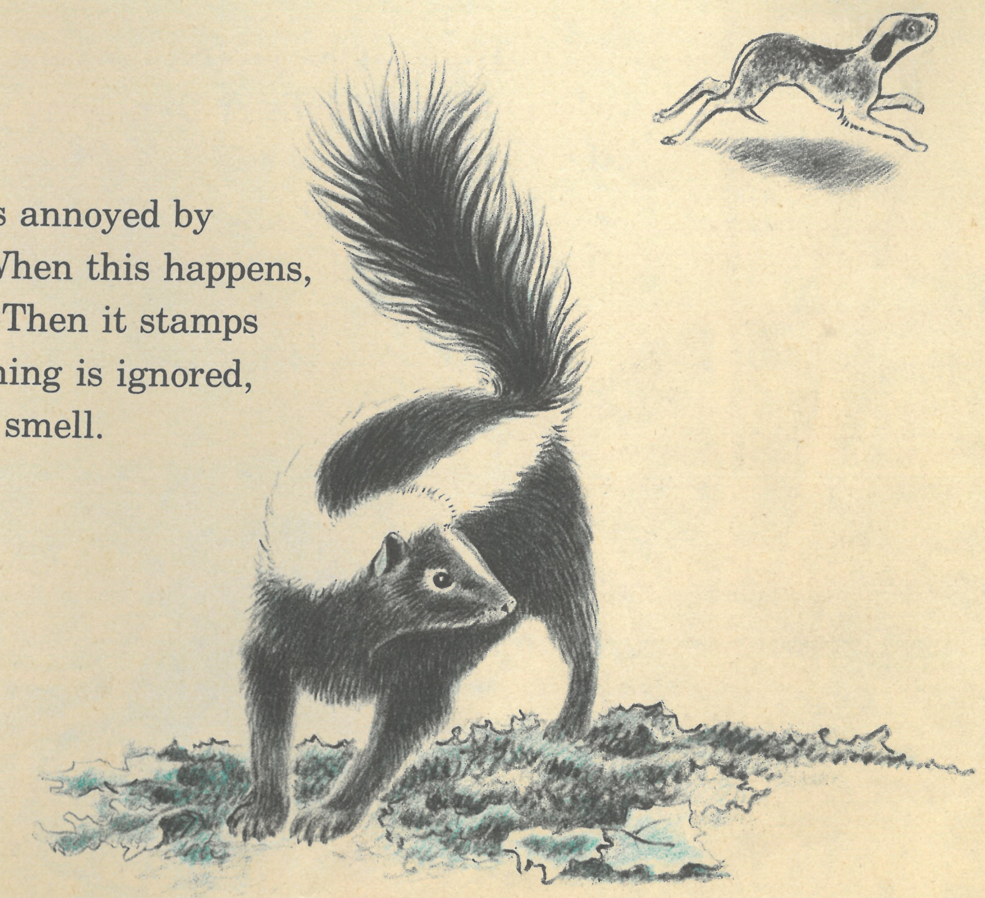
Porcupines sleep during the day
in holes in the ground, or between rocks.
At night, they climb into evergreen trees
to eat the tender bark.





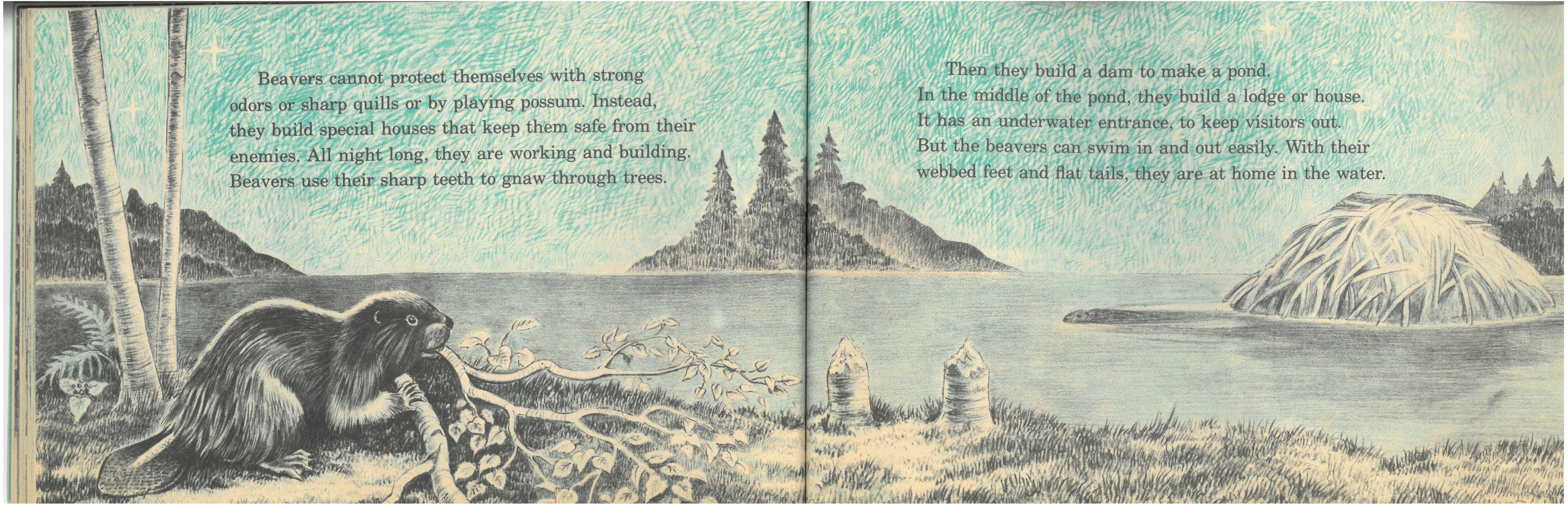
Skunks eat different kinds of food. They roam through the woodlands at night, looking for insects, fruit, small furry animals, eggs, nuts, and grass. Their favorite food is caterpillars.

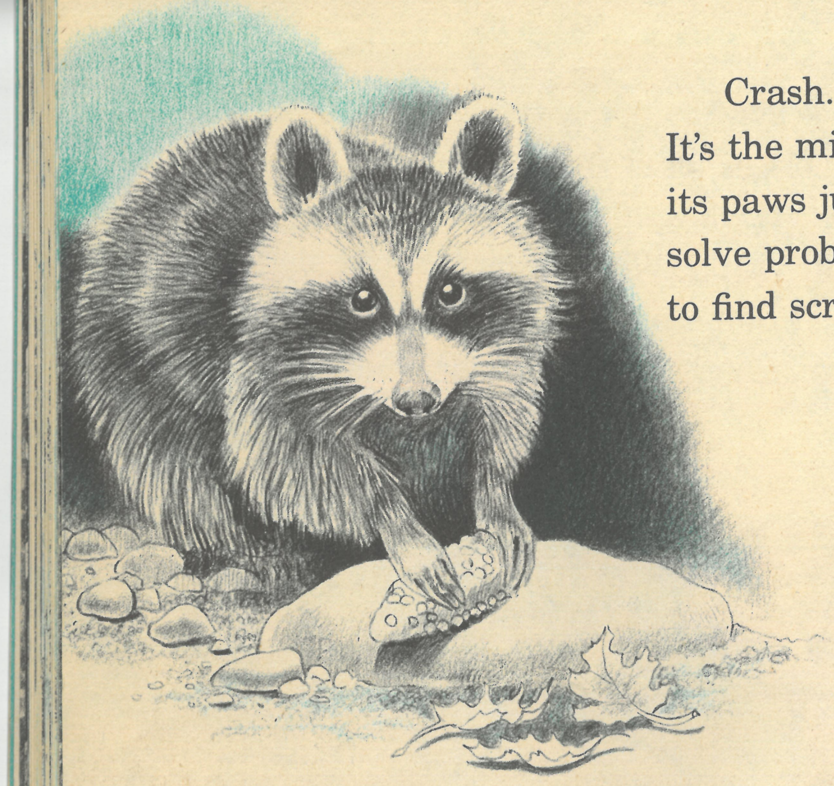
Sometimes a skunk is annoyed by someone or something. When this happens, the skunk raises its tail. Then it stamps its front feet. If this warning is ignored, the skunk lets out a foul smell. That's enough to chase anyone away!



Beavers cannot protect themselves with strong odors or sharp quills or by playing possum. Instead, they build special houses that keep them safe from their enemies. All night long, they are working and building. Beavers use their sharp teeth to gnaw through trees.

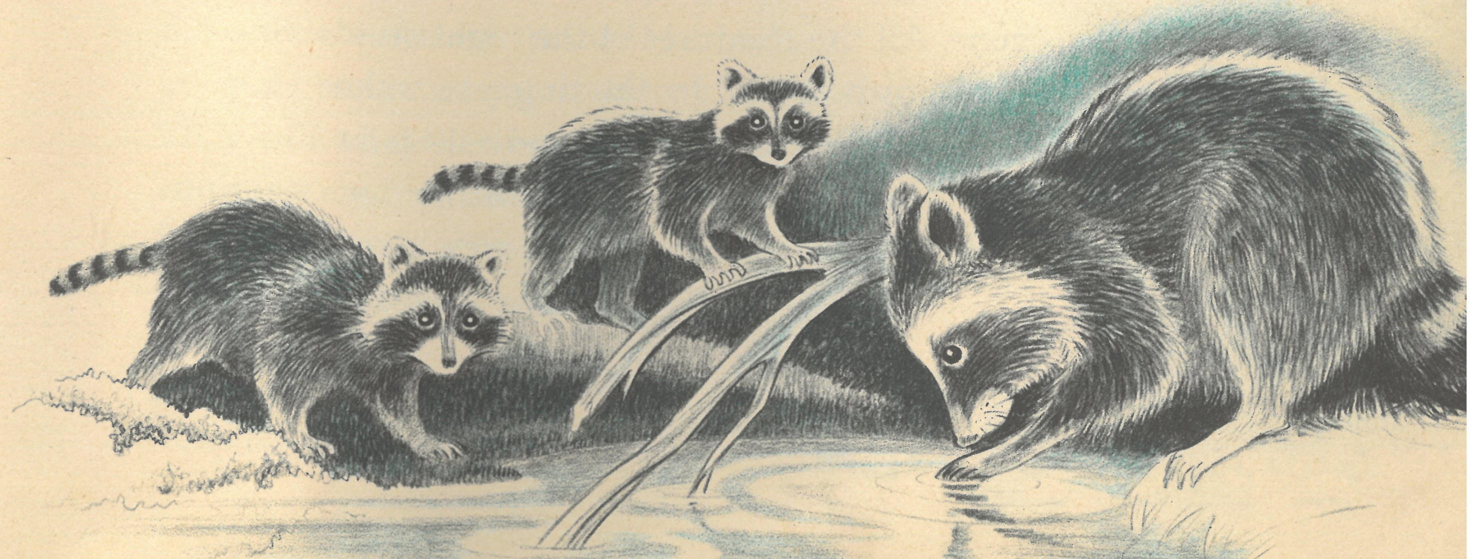
Then they build a dam to make a pond. In the middle of the pond, they build a lodge or house. It has an underwater entrance, to keep visitors out. But the beavers can swim in and out easily. With their webbed feet and flat tails, they are at home in the water.

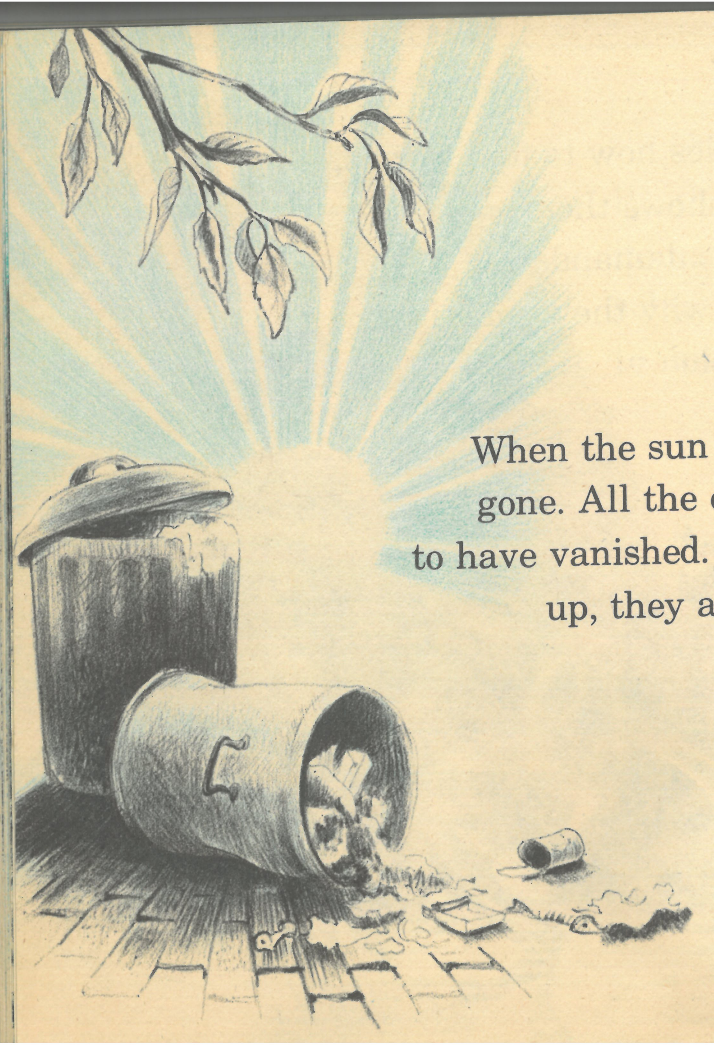




Crash. Bang. Who's out there by the garbage can? It's the midnight thief! The clever raccoon uses its paws just like hands. It quickly learns to solve problems...like how to open a garbage can to find scraps of food.

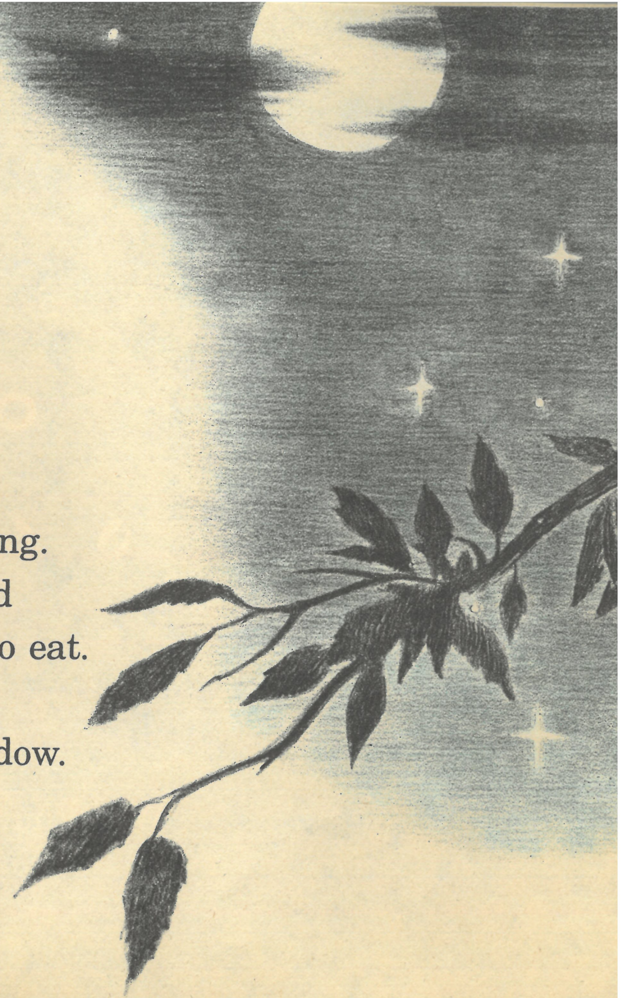
A mother raccoon teaches her babies how to find worms, insects, turtle eggs, and berries. She shows them how to catch tadpoles, fish, frogs and salamanders. But raccoons are very curious. That's why they sometimes get into midnight mischief when people build houses near the woods.

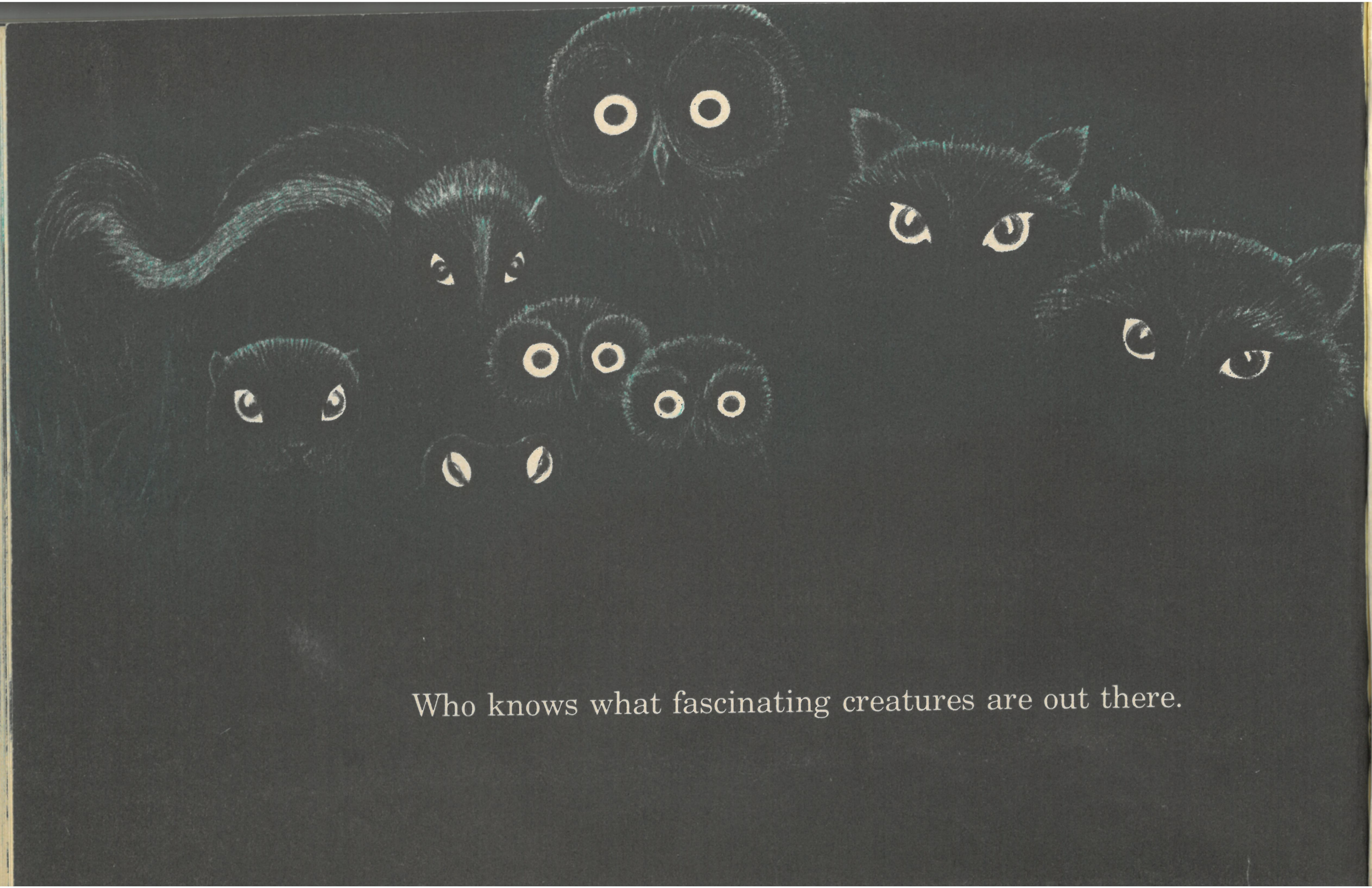




When the sun comes up, the raccoons are gone. All the creatures of the night seem to have vanished. And by the time you wake up, they are already sound asleep for another day.

But when darkness comes again,
the animals of the night will be back...
creeping and climbing, swooping and flying.
They will be slithering and scurrying and
snooping around, looking for something to eat.
So if you hear a sound in the middle
of the night, take a peek out of your window.





Who knows what fascinating creatures are out there.

Lincoln Elementary Library
Hays, Kansas

Troll Associates